# Encounter

June 1980 £1

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Edited by Melvin J. Lasky & Anthony Thwaite

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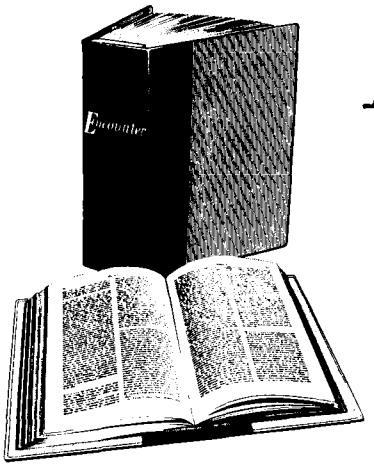

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# Encounter

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# *Richard Stern*

# *Mail*

AT LEAST it doesn't count as much as it used to: the day saved because of what's in the little steel cave. Age? Resignation? Or is it I care more for what *I* mail?

Still, it's still nice to get nice letters. Out of the unblue blue where people we're not thinking about are thinking about us. Yet not transmuting themselves (and us) into electric pulses in a vast system of immediacy. Just hes and hers, people with individual calligraphy, personal styles.

Even the salutations are special: "Dear Marcus"; "Dear Tuck"; or (one fairly recent style) "Dear Marcus Firetuck." Which is how the letter from Quito started.

The one from Sandra Lukisch began:

> "How I wish I could begin with 'Dear Marcus.' but I can't. You will always be the one who guided my first scale lines, reshaded my first chloropleth map. So, 'Dear Mr Firetuck.' "

Sandra is director of the Lukisch Cartographic Service in Melbourne. I haven't seen her for twenty years but remember her better than people who worked in this office last year. In the mid-Fifties, girls wore soft sweaters, cashmere, alpaca, lambswool. (So much memory has to do with clothes, what's inside and what issues from them. Legs, eyes, sweet—unmappable—hills, ridges, thickets; rough trapezoids, astonishing spheres; eye-brightness; smiles: Sandra's was—is?—a dolphin's deep serene; earlobes; nostrils; waist.) I remember Sandra's beautiful maps. They fuse in memory with her delicate roughness. (No standard beauty.)

In my head there are thousands of maps. My dear gone father said he remembered every mouth he ever worked on. To which hyperbole, Fred, my middle son, responded, "Lucky you aren't a proctologist, Grandpa." On the other hand—as it were—who is to gainsay those cavy regions? To any true investigator, every variation of the studied genotype fascinates. Nothing there can be beneath study, if not devotion.

Sandra writes she is getting married. "At forty, Mr Firetuck. Imagine." Not difficult, Sandra. Hundreds must have thought of spending years beside—and inside—you. (I myself.) "I had to tell you, dear old master. Who first showed me what an isopleth was." (A line which represents a constant value.)

Those who have stayed in our heads live there as isopleths; though often unrepresentative of anything but themselves. They are their own colour, flag, fruit and meat, the country of Their Self. Sandra stands for Sandra. And for the feelings rising as she re-enters the lit part of my head with her two sheets of typescript. Bless you, Sandra. I will send something or other to Melbourne for you and your fortunate air force colonel. (Did he use your maps?)

THE LETTER FROM Ecuador was something else. Last March, a fellow called me at my hotel there. I'd flown in from the Cartography Congress in Buenos Aires to give my little spiel on Andean mapping in relation to the new high-resolution photographs we'd been getting from a hundred thousand feet. Joachim ("but called Jock") Fopper had seen the notice of my talk in *El Comercio*. (The good newspapers of that splendid little town may not have sufficient news to fill their local pages.) He wondered if the speaker could be

> "the same man who'd written *Reliefs*. I did not think 'Marcus Firetuck' could be so common a name in your country."

It is the only time in my life that this has



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happened. In a foreign country—and not one of the world's most populous or worldly—someone who is not a cartographer, textbook publisher or military man has not only heard of me, but knows me in that tiny—if intense—part of my life of which *Reliefs* is the only—can I say?—monument.

A 44-page chapbook printed by a West Virginia press which "split the cost of printing" with me, *Reliefs* received two reviews (that I've seen, for there's no clipping service which hunts down the places in which reviews of such books appear). Yet Joachim—Jock—Fopper of Quito, Ecuador, not only owned a copy of *Reliefs,* had not only read and apparently found it—I can hardly credit and won't repeat his compliments—but he'd located—"through friends in New York whom I commission to send me little magazines from the Gotham Book Mart"—eleven of the fewer than twenty other poems I've published in publications, only one of which, *Poetry,* in my own home town, prints more than 2,000 copies an issue. Most of these journals bear the names of small animals—*Raccoon, Marmoset, Gnat*—and print fewer than 500 copies; yet out of this black hole of literature, Joachim Fopper had fetched a couple of hundred lines of Marcus Firetuck. "Your work meant something to me from the first three lines I read", he'd told me on the phone last March. And, no dispenser of vapour, he cited—I assume from memory—three lines from "Scratches on the Record": "They do not mean to hurt the music/They were not made by a mind/And no one will ever try to reproduce them. . . ."

These lines had "spoken to" Mr Fopper. Mr, *Herr,* or *Señor* Fopper. There were tiny Germanic tilts in his close-to-perfect English. Yet, as his letter informed me, he'd lived "twenty-odd years" on "this God-forsaken continent." I had asked him on the phone if he were a poet. "No. Unfortunately." He did not say then, nor does he say in his letter what he was (or is). He had just seen the notice in the newspaper; he was astonished, then thrilled at the notion that it might be "the very man" who had given him "such immeasurable pleasure." (Do I detect a stylistic influence of Firetuck in Fopper? The love of internal rhyme, verbal repetition, the mix of stiffness and idiom?) He did not dare to ask me to have a drink, he had hesitated a long time before telephoning, he did not want to be one of those importunate "voice-tremblers" who "intrude" into the lives of those who had "already done so much" for them.

I was travel-and-lecture weary, and also low: Ethel had flown back to Chicago from Buenos Aires and the cartographers here assumed that I was being taken care of by "someone else" (sweet Quiteño modesty). So, after our seminar, I was deposited at the *Colon Internacional* in a heap of weary loneliness. I suppose I should have asked Fopper to have dinner with me—the hotel food was terrific—but, who knew, intelligent as he seemed, and surely as sympathetic, wasn't it better to let well-enough be enough?

I did tell him how much his call meant. "This isn't an everyday occurrence, Mr Fopper. I am not exactly Lord Tennyson or T. S. Eliot. You've cheered me up considerably."

I DON'T THINK HE WAS SET on meeting me. I believe Fopper is one of those true readers whose truest passion is literary. To encounter the actual flesh of authors (or their characters) would be a gross intrusion on their perfectly-adjusted mental life. His phone call was, then, very daring. His letter is only slightly less so. Perhaps if I were a more prolific poet, Fopper would not try to drill for epistolary firetuckery.

The letter—about 2,000 words long—is almost entirely literary. It begins by quoting

> "one of the three French poets born in Montevideo, Jules Laforgue. The others, as I do not have to tell you, are Jules Supervielle and the astonishing Isidore Ducasse, the self-styled Comte de Lautréamont."

(He did not have to tell me, but I would have gone to my grave—not necessarily less happily—not knowing.)

> "I know a small master's career is, as Laforgue writes, 'decked out with rags and praise' (*'Un train pavoisé d'éstime et de chiffons'*), but I could not resist trying to sew in my rag. I hope it did not disturb you."

From this variation of his oral apology for "intruding", he goes on to the most intricate and subtle criticism I have ever had (and I include reviews of my professional—

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cartographic—publications). There are comparisons of my poems to ones in four languages, including poems by Americans of whom I've never heard.

An amazing performance by a true amateur of poetry. An amateur of Firetuck. An extraordinary letter. An extraordinary pick-me-up. (How I wish it could be sold in the drug stores between Valium and Mepro-probane. *Fopper's Uppers.)*

BUT WHO IS OR WHAT WAS Joachim—Jock—Fopper? I wonder now, and in Quito, a bit nauseous and dizzy from the height disease they call *soroche,* I wondered then. (Sucking the nausea-fighting barley-sugar candy given me by an English salesman, my seatmate from Buenos Aires.) Once I even wondered if Fopper's call was not a distortion of my dizziness. And later, over pickled *camaroñes* (the local shrimpy shrimp) and some *sopa quiteño* (egg and white cheese in a rich soup), served in the white and silvery dark elegance of a *Colon Internacional* dining room, I pursued the hints of vertigo to conjure up careers for Herr Señor Fopper. One was shaped by decades of reading mystery and spy novels. So: Joachim Fopper, the only one of the two hundred million people living on the enormous continent who knew Marcus Firetuck as a poet, one of the, say, fifteen? ten? human beings who had been enriched, expanded, *pleased* by my poems—the strangest and most beautiful of mental handshakes—this fan of mine was some Nazi-dribble who'd crawled out of Europe via the Odessa Network to South America where his brutal talents went underground to emerge only in such perverse passions as admiration for the obscure poems of a North American—and *for repentance*—Jew. Didn't such careful study of the obscure bespeak training, say, on Admiral Canaris's Counter-Intelligence staff? Indeed, might Fopper's "intrusion" be a subtle way of establishing an American contact?

"Tell me about yourself", I will write back to Fopper.

Or should I? Here in Chicago, with the day's rich mail, his four single-spaced typewritten sheets create an island of international lucidity on my desk. Between matt-finished cellulose plastic, calipers, t-squares, nomographic charts and cartographic journals, Fopper's letter is a grail of communion. Why should I test it for fool's gold?

FOR FIVE OR SIX YEARS NOW, my steadiest correspondent has been another man with whom I've had next-to-no physical contact. In the spring of 1973, I got away from a tumultuous house party my older children were throwing in our house in Door County and lunched myself in a restaurant in Sister's Bay. At the next table was an enormous young fellow whose head, I remember thinking then, could have been put up almost intact alongside the four presidents carved out of the South Dakota mountain. As I was marvelling at this stony, eyeglassed immensity, it turned my way and asked if it could borrow the sweetener in my sugar bowl. That began a monologue which ended with an exchange of addresses, and this, in turn, became an epic correspondence, the most intense and one-sided correspondence of my life (excluding a shorter one with my first fiancée, Mary Joe Weil—pronounced "wheel"—of Durham, North Carolina, back in the early months of 1952). It is certainly the most peculiar.

Vernon Bowersock.

Is he out of his mind?

I think not. Vernon is just out of your mind, at least out of mine. Or was then. By now I'm used to him. Vernon is one of the very few people who very early on is hooked by a life project. His project is self-reflexive. That is, Vernon is concerned with Vernon. Or, at least, with a kind of vernonisation of the world. Vernon wishes to make sense of everything he has seen, heard, or can think about. His tools are numerology and epic poetry. Vernon is always thinking "Where will this or that fit into the *Vernoniad*?"

There is a lot of *this and that.* Vernon runs up and down the United States getting a degree in one thing here, a degree in something else there. He marries, he separates, he divorces. He reads, he carries on his napoleonic correspondence, and he supports himself wherever he goes as a computer programmer. (Knowing such work was useful in any city, Vernon took it up in high school.) Vernon is not a careless man. Indeed, a theme of the future *Vernoniad* is that there is nothing

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accidental; everything belongs in the great scheme called Vernon.

Vernon was born in the only Mississippi county which seceded from the Confederacy (or does one say "stayed loyal to the Union"?). His grandfathers have been the county sheriffs. "As close to being dictator as humans can get in this country", says Vernon. So it is out of this singular world of authority and pride that the future epic poet comes.

FUTURE POET. There's the rub. Vernon has only prepared to write his epic. What's written now is introductory matter. Perhaps Vernon, dazzled so by the possibility of the *Vernoniad,* will write nothing but Introductions. But if one includes the letters to his four chief correspondents—"my four compass points"—Vernon's prose already constitutes an epic, a kind of Epic of Introduction.

I answer one in ten or twelve of Vernon's letters. (He doesn't require answers from his Easts and Wests: the three others are a preacher in Binghamton, Alabama, an undertaker in Lompoc, California—"picked because it's the setting for W. C. Fields' *Bank Dick*—and a beautiful seventy-year-old librarian in Lima, Ohio, so I can begin her letters, '*Ohi-o*'—'hello' in Japanese, I'm told—'Lovely Lima Lady Libe.' ") Why do I answer them at all? Because through Vernon I see much of the country and encounter a mentality my small, sceptical intelligence habitually rejects. I suppose too that Vernon's numerology is a wild form of that impulse which made me both cartographer and "lisper in numbers", a desire to achieve clarity by reduction.

Vernon, always in "financial holes bigger than canyons", "thrown out by three wives, all of whom I love and will always love", always working, reading, moving on and writing about it all, is I suppose my own Odysseus, the moving part of my essential inertness. I have been in 50 or 60 countries, but almost always in ways which eliminate their strangeness; Vernon has never left this country, but every inch of it is different for him.

163 Farrell Ave.
#192
St. Paul, Minn.

Dear Mr Firetuck,

It is 6:18, and I have consumed the day's second thousand calory. I took a four mile walk, jogged two, did ninety push-ups, forty kneebends. Tomorrow, I go for my weekend at the Sunfare Camp. I go twice a week. Erections are forbidden. Joke: "When do the Japanese have elections?" "Before bleakfast." I am twenty-nine years, three months, four days, six hours and thirty-one minutes old. I was conceived when George Marshall was making his Marshall Plan speech at Harvard University. Or close to it. You were conceived when Babe Ruth was hitting the twenty-seventh or eighth of his record-breaking sixty home runs. Lindbergh was en route to Paris when your excited? parents conceived you. "*Le hasard infini des conjunctions.*" (Mallarmé, *Igitur*—I know only this quote which is scrawled on the back-flap of Irma Rombauer's *Joy of Cooking* which work I slobber over as I eat my broiled turbot—120 calories, 200 with Tartar Sauce and catsup. How about the infinite romance of consolation to balance the infinite chance of conjunction?

I owe twenty-one thousand, nine hundred and seventy dollars, eight of them to Rosaleen who will let me pay back the others first. (She is in Spokane, earning good money in a carob and soybeanerie.)

Your friend,
Vernon Bowersock

Imagine. I was spawned in an heroic time. My loving progenitors were excited by Lindbergh's flight. (Had they come out of a newsreel theatre? Did they exist then? Or had they news on the radio? Did they own one in 1927? No. Too new.) Still, the excitement was in them, the market was good. What a grand time to be conceived. Does it account for the essential peace of my unheroism?

My own son, Frederick Gumbel Firetuck, was, I'm almost certain, conceived the night Ethel and I went out to Midway Airport with other lost-causers of 1957 to greet Adlai Stevenson's plane. Carl Nachman was there, and he was paying lots of genteel attention to Ethel; much as I liked him, my old jealousy was roused, and, that night, her body roused me like a new one. Fred sprang from that passion. Which explains—why not?—his blue eyes, his exceptional strength and height, his sweet reserve. Why not?

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3126 Walnut Street
Evansville, Indiana

Dear Mr Firetuck,

You'll note I've moved again. A bit of trouble in Sunfare. A forty-year-old blonde-headed, brunette-pubed lady from Milwaukee. Someone with such prodigious endowment should not be allowed the good clean health-fare fun of the colony. It was not before bleakfast, *mais* I was elected. Bad show. The saintly Mr Carmichael was taking his matutinal walk in the sun and nearly tripped over the barrier. He is like Voltaire's Jesus, "an enthusiast of good faith with a weakness for publicity." I was summoned, marked—though within terrible half-seconds my guilty member had resigned his office—and asked to remove it and its base. Life here in the besummered north is not for such as I anyway. I am Floridian—"oh Florida, venereal soil"—and I don't have the manners of you northerners.

I weigh 179, though I have not eaten today and on the road was down to 1500 greasy calories.

I'm on Page 134 of three books, pocket jobs. I will now advance to page 184 of each. The books: *Back Swing,* a novel; *The Arnheiter Affair; My Days with the Mafia.*

Do you realise what half a century of life means? It eases my terrible approach to the *mezzo del cammin.*

Your friend,
Vernon Bowersock

THERE IS ONLY ONE other real letter in this day's mail. (I don't discount the documentary value of dental bills, charity appeals, advertising flyers, and treasure packages, expected—subscriptions, say—or unexpected—perhaps forgotten; but they are not the essence of mail.) The letter is from my old pal, Lester Doyle, whose father was my teacher in Ann Arbor. (Working for the State Department in 1942–44, Prof. Doyle mapped the boundaries which became the three—later four—zones of post-War Germany.) Lester, a poly-progenitor, has not otherwise been as productive as his father. Nor has his life been as serene. Almost every Lester-letter contains at least one piece of bad news. Yet so considerate a person is pale, tiny Lester that he manages to find some countervailing sweetness to enclose with the month's misfortune. He has so large a family—five boys, three girls—that there is always a supply of each on which to draw.

Lester teaches Musicology at a remote branch of the University of Arkansas. As the only faculty member who has published an article, he has become a figure of both awe and exoticism. "I am their Paris and their Greece", he wrote me once. "But they are so remote. And so, it appears, am I." I've wondered if Lester's incessant progeniture is an attempt—like his letters—to people solitude. Today he writes that William, his second son, has had a leg amputated. "Soft-tissue sarcoma, I'm afraid, and the prognosis is not good." In our time, the mail is not used for one's own family catastrophes. A child injured, and one telephones or wires. So the epistolary heart beats very hard for miseries somewhat further removed. I hardly know William Doyle, remember only a very frail, very shy, small-chinned young man, a young edition of the professorial grandfather for whom he was named. William, like all Doyles, is very intelligent. He got scholarships to Milton and Williams College where he was a brilliant student of something like Provençal. He was a pro football freak and knew the lifetime won-and-lost records of every professional team. He must be about twenty-two and works for the Atlanta Braves baseball team (doing something with season subscriptions). "Eileen has gone to stay with him." Eileen is his oldest sister.

> "I was there for several days after the operation. William was very brave. I cannot bear the thought that we might lose him. Yet just that, we have been told, is what will soon happen."

There is other Doyle news, busy news, grandchildren conceived and jobs changed; then there is a paragraph about his research.

> "I am trying to complete an article on Delphine Potocka, the randy countess who had an affair with Chopin. Chopinologists are most exercised about the subject. A lady in Warsaw discovered a cache of letters in 1945. Or did she? You can imagine what life in Warsaw was like then? Is it unreasonable to see a starving lady scholar filling her

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belly with the invention of her head? I don't think poor Mme Czernicka capable of forging them. For instance, there's a line from 'Chopin' about wanting to set 'something precious in D flat.' That is a pun on the most intimate part of a woman's anatomy. Human beings surprise one, but I would be very surprised to see Mme Czernicka making this up."

So little William Doyle prepares to leave the world, and his loving father Lester works to fill the gap with a perhaps-affair of the melancholy genius. Giving dear Chopin this bit of post-mortuary life, does Lester somehow provide for his son?

THE WORD "MAIL"—I've looked it up—derives from the Old High German *malha*, a wallet. Its homonym, the woven metal rings used for armour, derives from Old French *maille*.

I like to think of the lexic-twins in Siamese unification: so in these small sacks, these envelopes, we inscribe our little *maculae*, the spots and stains of our individuality. Some we show to one correspondent, some to another. And the result is a grand mesh of strands from all parts of the world and of our lives. Against the day's brute fact, the fatigues and routinage of now, this mesh armours us.

Sandra Lukisch, Joachim—Jock—Fopper, Vernon Bowersock and Lester Doyle, and even you Frederick Chopin (or your letter-writer, Mme Czernicka), though none of you has met or will meet except in my head, on my desk, you are citizens of the country of correspondence, the soul of commerce across time and space; you are society itself. Beloved correspondents, blessed institution, may the terrible convenience of speedier linkage never triumph completely over your clumsy, difficult frailty. "Very sincerely yours, Marcus Firetuck."

## On the Border

Dear posterity, it's 2 a.m.
and I can't sleep for the smothering heat,
or under mosquito nets. The others
are swathed in theirs, humid and sweating,
long white packets on rows of chairs
(no bunks. The building isn't finished.).

I prowled in the dark back room for water
and came outside for a cigarette
and a pee in waist-high leafy scrub.
The moon is brilliant: the same moon,
I have to believe, as mine in England
or theirs in the places where I'm not.

Knobbly trees mark the horizon,
black and angular, with no leaves:
blossoming flame-trees; and behind them
soft throbbings come from the village.
Birds or animals croak and howl;
the river rustles; there could be snakes.

I don't care. I am standing here,
posterity, on the face of the earth,
letting the breeze blow up my nightdress,
writing in English, as I do,
in all this tropical non-silence.
Now let me tell you about the elephants.

*Fleur Adcock*

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*Alain Besançon*

# *The View from*
# East of Eden

## *Europeans & Americans in Dangerous Times*

I ACCEPTED the invitation from the Kennan Institute for Advanced Russian Studies (Wilson Center, Washington, D.C.) because I wanted to find out how the USSR is perceived in intellectual circles close to the American government, and whether there was any awareness of the danger to the vital interests of the United States which is contained in the USSR's threatening pressure on Western Europe. And on this latter point, I hasten to present my conclusion: namely, that not only is there as yet no anxiety about Europe, but even if the United States were to see Europe sink altogether into the vague, foggy, infinite remote zone in which it now hovers, it is not at all certain that they would be the slightest bit affected, at any rate not at first. But let me deal with my first point.

Bear in mind that ever since the last War the greater part of the work of scientific documentation and analysis of the USSR in all its aspects—historical, economic, sociological, political, and so on—has been carried out by American scholars in the United States. The effect of the fillip given some 30 years ago—of the natural functioning of the various research centres founded at that time, and of the usual processes of university careers and thesis production—has been to generate an ever-increasing number of books, symposia, and periodicals covering this field. On a single expedition around the Washington bookshops I bought about 40 books, all of them recently published, which I admit were as totally unknown to me as they undoubtedly would have been to the reading public at home. Think of Georges Duhamel in Chicago, the French infantryman of 1940 with his borrowed equipment of 1944, or President Queuille or General de Gaulle visiting New York, and of what they felt or might have felt; and you have some idea of my own feeling of being a small-time, fumbling, minor-leaguer.

Imagine a fine old building, immaculately maintained, and offering a choice of several libraries and several dining halls, any number of efficient secretaries and assistants, and a flexible, easy-going, helpful staff. Almost every day there is a seminar. For example, in order to cover the delicate problems of the Soviet Caucasus—where my own competence extends just far enough to tell me to steer well clear—the Kennan Institute thought nothing of collecting a team of a dozen experts quite at home with the intricacies of Ossetian, Adzhari and Abkhazi, or at the very least with Georgian and Armenian. They also included the sole French expert on these national questions (A. Bennigsen), who enjoys decent obscurity in his own country, but whom the Americans were well enough informed about to entice him from his niche, and who in Washington gives evidence before the various committees of the US Senate and the State Department. In all these seminars the debates are conducted in a courteous, coolly positive atmosphere of competence and respect for the facts.

But what was being said? Consulting my notes, I find this kind of thing. An expert on the SALT negotiations: "The Russians are less dishonest than we are. . . ." Another: "We must reach an understanding with the new Soviet class, which is daily becoming more modern, more sophisticated and more open. . . ." A nuclear physicist who collaborated on the H-bomb: "The Russians and ourselves must come together to take a grip on the disturbing problems of the survival of the human race. . . ." (The reason for worry was the Three-Mile-Island accident.) Another expert: "The Russians have made substantial concessions. We have been tough in the negotiation. The SALT agreement accords with our mutual interests. The Russians *need* to develop their economy, technology and standard of living, and that is why, in order to lighten the *burden* of military spending,



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they have agreed to concessions in the area of armaments. . . ."

At George Washington University there was a three-day super-seminar which brought together experts from the whole range of disciplines. A political scientist from Harvard presented a detailed report on age-brackets in the Soviet Communist party, which led to the conclusion that the leadership was "elderly", and was therefore bound to be replaced by younger men. A leading diplomatic light in the previous administration deigned to dole out a few small crumbs of his arcane knowledge, hinting with every word that he was still too close to the heart of things to tell us all he knew. Yet he told us enough about his thinking to make it obvious that his thinking was non-existent. The hollow vanity and ignorance of this famous figure, whose words are the object of solemn analysis by foreign-policy reviews, commentators and editorialists the world over, were for me an opportunity to meditate on the mystery of history. After him came a Soviet émigré who sounded to me like the most obvious *KGB* plant, and when I inquired about him my suspicions increased. A gentleman from the CIA assured me that it was quite true that his reputation was dubious, but that none of us need be disturbed. Dealing with the same subject of the SALT negotiations, this émigré was making a plea for the happy middle. American extremists and Kremlin "hawks" should both be sent packing. Reasonable people on both sides must come together in the common interest. SALT was a first step.

This same super-conference did not bypass the economic aspects. One CIA expert used lengthy calculations and intelligence sources (obviously undisclosable) to base his conclusion that by 1999 or thereabouts the Russians would find themselves forced to buy substantial amounts of oil, but that by this same date (more calculations, more secret sources of intelligence) they would find themselves short of hard currency. Deduction: the Russians will have a hard time supplying their allies with the necessary oil. In two decades, therefore. . . .

A professor from a big Mid-Western university dealt with Soviet agriculture. Its difficulties derive from the fact that its investment plans favour the acquisition of equipment and fertilisers at the expense of enlarging the area under cultivation—whereas "our experience", i.e. agriculture in Missouri, showed that the advantage lay the other way. One listener asked timidly whether the *Kolkhoz* concept didn't have some relevance to this discussion. The speaker's reply, for what it was worth, was that having chosen a "technical approach" he was unable to envisage a "systematic approach."

I DO NOT KNOW whether the few extracts quoted above will produce the same effect on the reader, but my own response was one of stunned depression. I noted that next to me Leopold Labedz, who in these matters must be numbered among the foremost experts in the world, sat head in hands in a state of acute misery. Could neither of us really intervene? We would have had to start again from "square one", and then from a totally different set of assumptions. So we kept our mouths shut. There was just too much to be said. Being used to French rhetoric, I had not realised that there could be another kind, just as hollow and just as spurious, but with the air of sticking strictly to fact. I always had a bias in favour of "Anglo-Saxon empiricism", and now I was discovering that within an oratorical style quite different from our own it could give rise to the same academicism, the same platitudes, and the same camouflaging of ignorance and error.

SO MY QUESTION is this: How is it that the United States, which after the War at any rate was the most "alert" country of all to the intricacies of the Soviet state, should with a few exceptions (Richard Pipes, Martin Malia, Marc Raeff—all members of the old brigade, with a dwindling following) have become worse informed, or less willing to be informed, than the countries of Western Europe? I was about to add "*à l'exception de la France*", but that would be unfair. French public opinion has given Solzhenitsyn and Zinoviev a deeper, sincerer welcome than has American public opinion. University academicism towards the USSR is no longer dominant, even at university. And if I did come across like-minded people in Washington, it was—and the fact is just too rare not to be recorded—in the French Embassy.

There is one broad answer to the question asked. Communism is only knowable through direct experience. From a distance, without contact with it, it can be feared, detested, analysed up to a point, but not integrally known. The influential classic writers all had experience of it. The great George Orwell made its acquaintance in Barcelona, for a few weeks. That was long enough for a genius, but it did take those few weeks. The American experts of the older generation knew it in their bones, almost all of them by prolonged contacts during the

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War. The new ones usually have no more experience of it than an academic visit, in conditions of protective asepsis and quarantine. Without that direct bodily knowledge, necessarily mingled with a certain fear, Communism is unimaginable. The most clear and consistent evidence will be greeted by puzzled outside observers with the same perplexity as accounts of UFO sightings. One is prepared to pay attention, but since there is no way of intellectually processing the information there is nothing to be done with it, and it remains a dead letter. No country is further removed from Communism than the United States, and no country has fewer reasons for fearing it.

Is this too general an answer? But there are a number of specifically American factors which will help to make it more precise.

THE FIRST OF THESE FACTORS is political. The spokesman for American democracy with the rest of the world is the Presidency, an organ which takes on greater weight either when there are exceptionally difficult domestic problems to solve (the Civil War, the Great Depression), or when there is some great international commitment, as in the case of the two World Wars. After World War II, the Presidency did not undergo the usual diminution.

It now appears to be in a state of crisis. I am not knowledgeable enough to decide whether the crisis is constitutional or basically political. American opinion sees the series of recent presidents as a succession of unlucky accidents—an assassination (Kennedy), a refusal to seek a new mandate (Johnson), a scandal (Nixon), an incompetent (Ford), and then another bungling amateur (Carter). It seems to me that we have to take note of two facts which give this string of accidents the cohesion of a series. The first is that one third of the Democratic party has gone over to what in Europe we would call *gauchisme*. Under Roosevelt the more progressive wing of the Democratic party had favoured extending the powers of the Presidency; but as it gradually radicalised, and at the same time found itself unable to control the Presidency as it had in the past, the progressive wing has been turning against it, and mobilising the weapons which are under its command in public opinion and the media. The second fact is that the Presidency has been deserted by what should be its proper constituency, where it stands most in need of support, namely civil society. The truth is that this society—in other words, US democracy itself—is normally happy to manage its own affairs, and dispenses as much as it can with the Federal executive. Now it can readily dispense with that executive once the major problems of American society have either been solved or at any rate are on their way through the normal process of resolution, which takes place at the local level.

Three such problems which once looked insoluble and which were seen as omens of doom on this side of the Atlantic, with a metaphysical dimension, have now entered quite straightforwardly into the normal American resolution process, which is simultaneously political, ethical, and technical. I refer to the Blacks, the Cities, and Pollution. Each time the process starts with an act of realisation, which is both moral and religious—"*Something must be done about it!*" Then comes the political phase: an adversary debate whose limits and guidelines are defined by the constitutional and judicial structure of the country. Lastly comes the political conclusion, where the Presidency is highly influential to begin with, but which comes to completion a long way from the White House, in the "grass-roots" territory of state, county, and town. Once the consensus emerges it is just a technical problem; and there you can rely on the Americans.

The Viet Nam episode was seen as some sort of millstone slung accidentally round the country's neck, a disabling burden preventing the United States from tackling the real problems, which were domestic ones. "Viet Nam" was not a problem in its own right, and at best it had to be got rid of rather than solved. The way France got rid of the Algerian conflict as a preliminary to facing an urgent task of domestic rebuilding gives us a slight idea of America's impatience to pull out the thorn in its own side, which was hampering a domestic effort felt to be no less urgent, immediate, and fundamental.

We see the American state and its foreign policy faltering, and from this we deduce a "crisis of society", whereas the real position is that it is the very success of that society that hits the visitor in the face.

TO HELL WITH the seminars, let's go out and see! It is May-time, and this is Virginia, and out there is Chesapeake Bay. What countryside! It is Poussin's *Summer*, the earthly paradise where the trees reach higher, the woods are more airy and majestic, echoing with birdsong, and the forest green is brightened

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here and there by the white brilliance of the dogwood.

We can take a trip on the broad James River, admire the peaceful, lush plantations, make our respectful visits to Jefferson's mansion at Monticello and to Washington's at Mount Vernon. Everything is redolent of domestic order, good husbandry, the judgment of the landowner, the fairness of the master, the decent modesty of the children, the prudent goodness of the parents, and the religion of them all.

With all due respect to critics, I do not see that the original ideal has been disfigured. The modest grandeur of Mount Vernon and the human scale of Williamsburg still cast their warm reflection on the wide spread of the suburbs. The benefits of an accepted government are visible even in the natural and relaxed expressions of the people. How restful it is for a European, for a Frenchman, to encounter this great social peace. The citizen may be threatened by the criminal, but there is no threat from his fellow citizen. The presumption of good will is as common there as the expectation of resentment, rudeness, and envy among ourselves. While it is so hard in France to take money from a taxpayer's pocket if not to put it straight into someone else's, common political consent in America means that public projects are accepted by the public. The splendour of the bridges, roads, hospitals, universities, libraries and museums, in such stark contrast to the simplicity of individual private life, everywhere highlights the blessed notion now virtually expelled from our political life in France, the notion of *le bien commun*, the common good.

Am I dreaming? If so, it is an American dream, and it is a long time since they have been so close to living it out. It is too soon to assess the gravity of the sickness which hit America towards the middle of what I would call the "Dirty Sixties." I still remember my own disbelief at Berkeley in December 1964 when Professor Malia, with the insight of Goethe at Valmy, pointed to a group of students on Telegraph Avenue and explained to me in detail that from that day and that place, all the world's universities.... I saw the degenerating state of affairs in Rochester in 1968, when it was impossible to imagine anything more slimy, sickly, and stifling than the moral climate in that university, in spite of the crisp winter weather. The Blacks, the spreading pollution, and the urban crisis were all becoming a curse. It was possible to feel that the nation's moral fibre itself was fraying, so deep were the domestic stresses and confusions.

When I came back in 1975, the recovery had already begun. The Blacks were starting to become citizens; the pus was being squeezed out of the universities; and by an inscrutable coincidence the Presidency too was being flushed clean. Since then an enormous task has been undertaken, which is no less than the perpetual, monotonous, unrealisable and ever-renewing *grand nettoyage* of America. We have seen America turn back to its Tocquevillean sources, more democratic, more local and decentralised, and also more technically competent than ever. And since the nation's exertions have been as great as its successes, that has been enough to focus America's attentions inward. And even without this intense involvement in domestic problems, America is so vast, so complete, and so diverse that there is no obvious reason for it to be concerned about outside events. Are its means of political communication with the outside world out-of-order? All right, who's worrying? Europe never has taken up much space in the US press. Now it has practically disappeared. And Israel, which used to be such "big news", is hidden somewhere in the inside pages. Journalists do seem interested in Africa; although there has been detailed information about trends of thought and political parties in Zimbabwe, this is purely a reflection of the great reorientation and intellectual uproar imposed by the continuing integration of the US Negro millions. University departments of Russian, French, English, and German are shrinking fast. I am told that tourism to Europe is decreasing.

On the other hand, "American studies" are seeing a spectacular rise. In the galleries one might think (and here perhaps rightly) that post-War painting, sculpture, and architecture simply did not exist outside the USA.

I HAVE MADE a connection between the widespread isolationist trend in America and the circumstances of its domestic political life. I wonder whether it does not derive from a plain and simple effect of scale and mass. Astronomers talk about "black holes", celestial bodies whose gravity is so great that light cannot escape from its pull. Consequently they are shut in on themselves, and have no communication with the rest of the universe, each black hole forming a universe in itself. Similarly the very size of the United States cuts them off from the rest of the world. Self-sufficiency has been a watchword of this Republic of emigrants from the very beginning. Never has it looked closer to having been achieved.

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THIS IS ENOUGH to explain why foreign policy—except for momentary international excitements (Castro, Khomeini, Kabul)—no longer has much interest for Americans. Relations with Russia are conceived not so much as a permanent necessity—a lasting challenge between two nations, an irredeemable power conflict—but as a tedious pending file, a vexatious litigation, an expensive lawsuit which needs settling as fast as it can be fixed, so that it will stop removing the nation's attention from those serious matters which in a democracy are always domestic matters. There again, on the model of "Viet Nam", but before then arguably on the model of 1919 and 1945, the Soviet Union is not perceived as being an element in an international order continually being upset and then rearranged, but as what hinders America from fulfilling its calling, which is to build and then rebuild *itself*, under its own responsibility, and without interference from others.

Furthermore, in foreign policy the Americans automatically use the form and method of their domestic policy. In the American *contrat politique* the understanding is that conflict finds its solution as the outcome of rational debate and amid concern for the common good. Conflict therefore culminates in an agreement which respects the mutual interest, producing a shared balance. When this is applied to the Russians the result is an imbalance which is neither corrected nor even perceived. The Americans seek a technical agreement where the Russians seek political victory. In the SALT negotiations, for example, the Americans take it very seriously when the Russians make some technical concession, without any clear realisation that this concession is only a Russian ploy to achieve political success. I have always had the utmost difficulty in getting an answer to the question; what political gains do you believe that the Russians were expecting to achieve through the SALT accords, before they agree to sign?

Then again, the Americans make each negotiated agreement an end in itself—"a problem-solving opportunity"—whereas the Russians make it an element in an overall strategy in which that agreement constitutes one step.

Lastly, what the Americans expect from an agreement is mutual satisfaction, but the Russians see it as the verdict on a battle in which there is necessarily one winner and one loser. In standard Bolshevik practice you do not sign an agreement unless it represents a victory, for even if it sets the seal on a defeat, that same defeat would have been worse had no agreement been signed. In this sense, the treaty of Brest-Litovsk was a victory. By the same token, the SALT accords are a much greater one.

So the effect of applying the democratic method and seeking the "common good" is inevitably to transform the adversary into a partner. The course of negotiation gradually bestows respectability on the Russians; as the negotiation advances towards agreement they become more "reliable", more "responsible", and in the end they are nothing less than "nice guys."

This is bound to happen if the negotiation is mistakenly conducted on the terms and ground familiar to democracy. It is the triumph of illusions and of wishful thinking. When disillusion sets in (usually on the very morning after the agreement), then the whole process of negotiation has to start all over again: from the first indignant refusal to negotiate, all the way through to friendly reconciliation, complete with smiles, handshakes, hugs, discreetly photographed kisses, and a rapturous press corps.

IS ALL THIS ENOUGH to account for America's intellectual lapse and loss of understanding in matters concerning the USSR? Surely not. But in order to put forward other reasons we have to depart from the strictly political arena and ask ourselves questions about America's intellectual constants, about its permanent categories of thought if such there be.

Here I venture to advance a thesis. The basic element in Communism, or the key element at any rate, is ideology. If you understand the one, you will understand the other; if you do not understand it, then you understand nothing. What is it that hinders grasping or "intuiting" ideology? In the light of historical experience, two diametrically opposite states of mind. You don't understand Communism if you are yourself infected by that ideology or by a kindred ideology. Nor do you understand it if you are totally unscathed by it. It is necessary to be neither "infected" nor "sterile", but "immunised."

SOME TIME AGO I found myself wondering whether ideology might not have "caught on" in the United States for the first time. Particularly in the field of Slavic studies, the "Dirty Sixties" saw certain "progressive" forces conducting what was often a pretty aggressive revision of the rock-bottom Anti-communism which had formerly

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flourished unopposed. A Loren Graham made Bolshevism "just another culture", and Marxism "just another denomination." A Jerry Hough armoured himself in "political science" to discover a pluralism in the Soviet government which could be equated with American pluralism. David Granick compared the management of Soviet state enterprises with that of American business enterprises. Stephen Cohen applauded the career of Bukharin. Such attitudes were by no means a profession of Communism, even if they all considered Anti-Communism more unacceptable and more thick-headed; still there might have been an indication that an ideological wedge had been driven into America's cultural space, and that this would now become not so very different from the French or German landscape of today. . . .[1]

My recent visit has persuaded me otherwise. Certainly there has been a veneer of "Marxism" on the American left; but it is crumbling, and leftism is swinging irrevocably back to its old tradition, which is populist, radical, moralising and religious, and pays no heed to general theory. The flourishing "social sciences" (anthropology, psychology, sociology, political science) have fostered a radical critique of American customs, and they give backing to a kind of ethical social protest which remains, if one scratches the surface a little, religious. It is, therefore, the second hypothesis which is the correct one. It is not because of ideological contamination, but on the contrary because it is unable to locate anything corresponding to ideology within itself, that the American mind seems incapable of understanding it.

Consequently, we must turn for enlightenment to religious history. Ideology develops in religiosity like a cancer in a body. That is why one of my objects of curiosity was religious health in the United States. Would I observe the same withering and decay as in my own native land?

IT IS NO SECRET that the United States is the last outpost of religious beliefs in the developed Western world. Religious observance prevails among the majority of the population (Protestant, Catholic, Jewish); as many as two-thirds are "practising believers", which is several times the European rate. Not unlike Muslim countries, there is distrust in the United States for the man who does not pray and does not worship (even if he worships the devil, as among the sects in California). As in 19th-century Germany, the divinity school is an integral part of the university. Religion forms the social bond, sets the seal on one's belonging to the community, is the inseparable companion of democracy; and vice versa. So much for form, what about content? I shall refrain from making a judgment here. All I have are impressions, so let me just quote from my notes.

**26 April**— On television, a religious programme. Rex Hayward, from **Akron**, Ohio, surrounded by his plentiful family, **sings** Praise of Lord Jesus all over the planet (on **the** summit of Kilimanjaro, in a valley of **Hong** Kong, down in the Grand Canyon, etc.). Then he sells his book, like a packet of detergent, with the argument: "It will make a difference in your life!" This book demonstrates "the agreement between the laws of man, the laws of nature and the laws of God."

It is at once embarrassing and touching. 17th-century France raised religion so inaccessibly high that it has become private, out of an excess of propriety and respect. It is touching to see this preacher putting a little show-business into his faith, which is both financially profitable and good for the soul, because his doctrine (*Dieu et mon droit*) is less perverse than what you generally hear in our own parishes. But it is embarrassing because it is rather stupid all the same, and because this can never lead to anything intelligent. To an affective mystique perhaps, but never to an intellectual life.

**30 April**— The *R*s take me to see a childhood friend, a minister in *Y*, Pennsylvania. We attend a service (Presbyterian). The sermon, long and fine, deals with the Flood: the parish is next door to Three Mile Island.

I rediscover the Calvinist tradition. Destruction is in ourselves. All it would require is the withdrawal of divine grace for it to erupt at once. Destruction is basically self-destruction. It stems from our corruption and lives inside us all. It depends on the same grace whether or not we are saved, for Noah is also within us all. . . . No mention of the verse where God, as a sign of the first alliance, promises that he will no longer destroy the world.

The young minister is frail, with an attractive laugh, and a great deal of gravity and simplicity. His house is very unassuming, in an unknown street in a little unknown town.

At dinner, a kind of fish *pâté*, salad, a big

[1] For similarities and differences, amid additional detail, see the articles on "intellectual hygiene" by Leopold Labedz and M. J. Lasky in the February ENCOUNTER.

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chocolate cake with alternate layers of cream, all of this with generous helpings of tea. Then we go for a stroll in the graveyard, on top of a grassy hill. The graves have no crosses. One of them carries the inscription: "HERE I BEAR WITNESS TO MY LOVE FOR MY SECOND WIFE."

By a pleasant road I arrive at Mount St Mary College, one of the cradles of American Catholicism, where my friend *B* teaches. The architecture French and 19th-century (the college was founded by French immigrants from the Revolution), but with the American spaciousness in the buildings and gardens, and without the timorous atmosphere of our Catholicism. The same Saint Theresa and Curé d'Ars, but in marble instead of plaster. We dine on good meat and good wine. *B* feels very happy. The urbanity and politeness of his colleagues belongs to what in France is an almost bygone state of ecclesiastical behaviour. *B* also has nothing but praise for his students' natural, cheerful, unaffected piety. They will be good Christians and good priests.

Will they arrive at an intellectual, philosophical life?

I HAD OTHER experiences, and these are my provisional conclusions on all of them.

Before even reaching old New England, Christianity had stretched the ties which the classical Middle Ages had striven to build—and the late Middle Ages to untie—between religion and metaphysics. Nominalism and the preaching of the Reformers had pushed the Christian religion back into a Biblicalism which paid no attention to Aristotle and Cicero. What remained was theology. But the theological furore that took hold in England ended by producing a sort of disgust, particularly among its victims. The Puritan model could only become the pan-American model by accepting the principle of tolerance, part of which meant renouncing the growth of the intellectual roots of religion below a certain depth. In order for the religious conflict which had devastated Europe to spare the Americans, after theology had been dissociated from metaphysics, religion was dissociated from theology as much as was possible without damage. That was the rule of the game; that was the habit of mind quickly adopted by the American people; and new "denominations" had to bend to it. Even Catholicism, even Judaism.

This in no way implies a weakening of religion, if indeed it can be measured. On the contrary it appears to have prospered much more than in Europe in two fields which were wide open to it: those of ethics and sociality. Judge the tree by the fruit, the theory by the results: the Gospel and "pragmatic empiricism" are agreed on this point at least. You only need to travel through the country to assess the extent to which religion is prolific in good deeds, and hospitals shoot up everywhere under the aegis of St Luke or King David. American public benefaction is basically religious. Religion has become so intimately a community affair that Church and Synagogue have taken back the etymological meaning which they have lost in Europe, namely that of "people's assemblies", where nearly everybody meets once a week for the service. Religion sets its seal on the social contract, which is therefore redoubled as a spiritual contract in a genuinely achieved democracy.

A contract: it is this notion that illuminates the Americans' relationship with their European origins. When we say that they are a "new country", what do we mean? In a way there was no break between America and Europe, since Europe was entirely transported overseas, with its language, its customs, its arts, its law, and its God. It is at least equivocal to talk about "youth" (or even "barbarism") when there has been no violent discontinuity between the oldest civilisations of Europe and their American offshoot. Ever since its foundation, and long before Independence, America belonged to civilisation. The break (because there has been a break) has arisen from a common wish, the American contract. People are not born biologically American as they are born French, German, or English. They must subscribe to their Constitution, something which no European is obliged to do. Anything which is not part of the contract—and here I refer mainly to cultural habits and metaphysics—can be preserved as an individual heritage or cultivated as a speciality; but it will remain outside the requirements of citizenship. What is American is a matter decided among the citizens of the country, a deliberate, voluntary construct. America has no roots because it did not want any. The vision of the "City on a Hill" contained a germ of revolutionary spirit.

THE PROJECT was viable, and its success has been beyond imagining. It was not, as in the Russian parlance, "building socialism", but it was building Paradise, with the garden of Eden wholly under new management, Adam ruling over plant and beast, and not forgetting to pay homage to his creator. That Eden exists: I have found it in Virginia, in Maryland, and to some extent

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everywhere. It is almost as bright and as beautiful as a true Eden. Then where is the difference?

In the roots. They are not permitted to grow deep, not below a certain level. The tree is splendid, but no matter how glossy the foliage it stays alive only because of fertilisers, constant attention, the gardener's expertise, and the citizen's vigilance. It is not so much a real tree as a kind of gigantic lettuce, a colossal garden vegetable.

Perhaps it is this that justifies the highly subjective impression which I have encountered among many Europeans, that in this land nothing has foundations, not even the buildings. For all their pomp and size, the buildings of Washington have no weight, and seem like models on a scale which it is hard to evaluate. People's minds conform to stylistic patterns and to matrices of ideas which seem to be adopted rather than inherited, used rather than believed, borrowed rather than owned. Besides, they can be changed, and often are changed; but what cannot be changed is the kind of relationships with these ideas and styles. Tocqueville remarked that America was restless and monotonous, *agitée et monotone*. Restless because events, influences, and fashions are constantly flooding in from outside; monotonous because these all act like applications of different gardening styles to a plant which remains what it is, with its shallow roots, impudently green leaves, and brightly coloured fruits.

AND THIS IS WHAT CREATES—I am back now to my theme—the American resistance to ideology. If the United States has never committed certain monstrous acts committed by Europeans, it is because these European acts were committed in the name of first principles, strong enough to overthrow the common morality and to derive another from it. America has remained loyal to the common morality because it distrusted first principles. The roots of Europe reach very deep, but they suck up poisonous juices which America just does not absorb. If ideology is a perverted metaphysic, America is safe from it. The same religion which, bearing its freight of metaphysics, exposes Europe to ideology, has only to be pruned of that contentious growth to protect the United States from the selfsame affliction. The American plant is resistant to phylloxera.

LET ME CONCLUDE by returning to the problem posed at the outset: what Europe can expect from the United States by way of defence against the USSR.

There is a famous remark by Tocqueville about how democracies are slow to go into war, and slow to come out. The most advanced of democracies proved that in the two World Wars. It took Pearl Harbor to steel America's will. After that, it plunged straight ahead into that typically democratic process of demonising the Enemy and sanctifying the Ally, which led up to the victory and the world catastrophe which settled that War. The Russians, whose constant historical landmark is the Second World War, are perfectly well aware that the fatal mistake of the Axis was to provoke the United States. Consequently they are not going to *offer* the United States a Pearl Harbor. Their problem is to go as far as they possibly can while at the same time avoiding putting their finger on the sensitive spot which might trigger a reorientation and mobilisation of the American democracy. Because if that mobilisation were to come about, the Russians know very well that they would quickly be outclassed, unless they had already gained irreversible advantage on the ground.

To ask what this tender spot might be, and what Soviet action would produce a Pearl Harbor reaction is possibly a vain intellectual exercise, and certainly a discouraging one. When one is inside the United States, in the luminous interior of the "Black Hole", all other regions of the world appear remote and superfluous to American affluence. If Europe falls piece by piece, by slow transition from "Finlandisation" to "communisation", and especially if that transition comes about "legally", I don't see how that reaction might be produced. It is at present very difficult to envisage what Soviet action would be bound to produce that American reaction. "Afghanistan", a kind of ricochet from the pent-up anger over the helpless hostages in Iran, gives few real clues. Would Berlin, or Israel, or perhaps Saudi Arabia? What of a Euro-Communist France or Italy? One readily visualises the United States realigning themselves on their own continent, looking out to the Pacific.

That is because the slowness, or absence of reaction, which characterises democracy in general in the conduct of external affairs is redoubled in America by the two special circumstances which I have attempted to analyse.

(1) **The crisis of the Presidency.** This is not to be confused with a crisis of American democracy. On the contrary. It is because the latter is obeying its own principles and taking them through to their logical conclusion, because it has achieved such extraordinary and unhoped-for successes, that it

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allows this organ to wither, because it feels small present need for it and because it involves no risk to its domestic constitution.

(2) **Misjudging the enemy.** The causes of this failure are political and intellectual: democracy's difficulty in imagining anything different from itself, and behaving in any but its own ways. Communism is hard to understand wherever you are. In the United States it is over the horizon, both physically and morally.

*EAST OF EDEN?* This was the title of a best-selling novel and maybe taken as a convenient description of our own position. Does it not serve Europe right (and France in particular) if it is so precarious? Anti-Americanism is a repellent attitude, not unlike anti-Semitism in so far as it is engendered in envy and develops in hatred and distrust. Yet it has made itself at home among us; and in most of our political excitements it counts as a sacred principle, a positive virtue. I do not know what price we shall have to pay for this indulgence; in any case we will not be welcome in the gardens of paradise.

But events in the old paradisal areas of the Middle East call for at least a small postscript. After Iran, after Afghanistan, there appears to be a sudden and impressive American awakening, almost indeed as if a kind of Pearl Harbor had happened. Perhaps all my pessimism, scepticism, suspicions were mistaken? How I wish they were! But I still have my doubts. And as for our own European response to the danger signals, I prefer not to speak about the unspeakable.

## Burnt Brown by the Sun

The Sun blazed above, impersonal
but we were told this Sun was Aryan
as everything important was Aryan—
like the people over the vindyas,
their skin a pale gold
their height, their syllables
were all, all Aryan
and we, who turned our full Dravidian face
to the Sun
with the complete trust of a Sunflower
were burnt brown.

And then we began to learn
to learn to apologise
for old in-breeding grandmothers
who fed us as small brown children
sitting on clean-swept earth
fed us on cooked rice
laced with the salt of folk-tales
fed us on curds and Kamban
we are now asked to thrust behind
to accommodate the sibilant bureaucrats
who are not burnt brown by the Sun.

This Aryan I have been talking about,
He can be gracious at times
He said the other day:
"You know, you are quite an attractive woman
Even though you are from the South."

*Lakshmi Kannan*

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*George Watson*

# Political Language & Its Disrepair

WHY IS political language so antiquated? The question is itself old. Marx had little in common with Lord Acton, but he made a remark either of them could have made when he complained of "the borrowed language" men use to conduct their political debates. "The tradition of the dead generations", he warned in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*, "weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living. . . ." By a usual irony, it is now Acton and Marx who weigh upon us. Political man, and not least political intellectuals, walk backwards into the future, their eyes on past controversies and their mouths full of ancestral jargon; and they often look better prepared to fight the last battle than the next.

It is no wonder, then, if terms like "liberalism" and "socialism", "capitalism" and "public ownership", thwart and distort an understanding of where, near the end of a violent and bitter century, our best choices now lie. We find it hard to understand how *little* we can learn from the past, except that the past is different. As extremists try to turn Ireland back into a 17th-century War of Religion, so do those in advanced industrial nations—the Anglo-American "New Left" of the 1960s, say, or the Baader-Meinhof sympathisers in West Germany—indulge in the make-believe that we can return to an early 19th-century world of nascent industrialism and the theories of class war it provoked. Our revolutionaries are far more reverent of political tradition than are our conservatives. (In fact it is hard to get a Conservative to talk about any past event earlier than the strikes that ended the hopes of Mr James Callaghan's Labour government in the winter of 1978–9.)

What we can hope to learn from the past, I suggest, is why our political terms are as misleading as they are. Why, for example, do we still think of "revolution" as pre-eminently left-wing? For reasons remotely connected with our recollection of two great 18th-century revolutions, it seems likely: the American and the French. But Acton, who was younger than Marx, could see that reform changes and revolution often keeps things just as they are. It is a case of the young liberal seeing further than the old socialist. "*The object of revolution is the prevention of Revolution*", he remarks in his notes. The point is still little understood. The fact is that Gladstonian liberalism thought socialist dogmas old-fashioned, as the liberalism of Keynes and Beveridge has done since, because tied to an antiquated doctrine about the violent seizure of power. But there is *nothing* radical—necessarily, or even commonly—about a violent seizure of power. Revolution can easily be conservative: a quick transition from the Bourbons to Napoleon, from the Czars to Stalin, from the Hohenzollerns to Hitler. That is the essential truth that the reforming mind has brought to the problem of power. It is a truth known to Acton, to Gladstone, and to more recent prophets' like George Orwell. And it is a truth we are now witnessing the consequences of, in the Iranian revolution of 1979 and in Ireland too, as well as in much of Black Africa. The slow conversion of official Communist parties in Western Europe away from revolution shows that even Marxists are not too old-fashioned to learn it, though it takes time. The next step is for conservatives to see it too.

I WANT NOW to consider how our political terminology works. I do not just mean the names of parties, though there are certainly many, since the general election of May 1979, who ask if the Conservative Party is anything less than radical in its objectives, and whether the labour movement enjoys more or less power under a Labour government nowadays than under any other. The problem I have in mind is much wider and deeper than that, and closer to Acton's concern with the buried assumptions we make when we use words. It is about terms like Left, Right, and Centre. It is about



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whether what we were brought up to call "capitalism" and "socialism" are, in fact, genuinely contrasting systems; and about the direction in which radicalism, in the age of the mixed economy, can now be said to lie.

Left and Right are not traditional terms in British politics: they entered the stream of ordinary debate as recently as the 1920s. Before that, terms of linear description like these were used in English only to describe continental political systems, notably the French and the Prussian. Westminster before the First World War, rather like Washington today, was felt to be distinct from all that: "Either a little Liberal, or else a little Conservative . . .", as the policeman sings in Gilbert and Sullivan; and there were plenty of qualifying terms like "moderate" and "advanced" to make those party labels supple and variable.

It was the advent of Labour as a principal party of state after 1918 that made all that look inadequate, and in the last half-century a determined effort has been launched to make the continental jargon of Left, Right and Centre work for British politics: to see Conservatives on the Right, Labour on the Left, and the Liberals in the Centre. It has never worked very well; it worked remarkably badly in the election of May 1979, with the Conservatives in favour of free collective bargaining by trade unions; the Liberals against; and Labour divided, in the middle; and it is now an open question whether anyone but a few obstinate intellectuals will ever want to describe British political debate in these terms again. The language of our politics is in disrepair, and it is doubtful if anything less than a new system will do. It has been tinkered with again and again until it is incapable of performing any useful function.

Some of the difficulties of terms like Left and Right are in no way confined to British politics; and they are making Europeans in general wonder whether assumptions universally accepted fifty and even twenty years ago were ever justified. I say universally, because the propositions I wish to question now are scarcely partisan; they are in no way characteristic of one party rather than another, whether between the wars or since 1945. They have been widely seen as axiomatic. And one of the reasons why our political debate is as fluid and unpredictable as it now is lies in the fact that they no longer look axiomatic, or even true.

FIRST, socialism was widely seen as "anti-capitalist." That, one might almost say, was the whole point of it, irrespective of whether you were for it or against. It was widely supposed to be a way of dismantling the power that goes with large accretions of capital investment.

We now know that it is not. If one were to ask who the biggest capitalist on earth is, one would surely have to answer in terms of the government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. It owns and controls practically the whole of Russian industry and agriculture, and much besides. The capital power of the government of the USSR, backed as it is by armed might, is enormously bigger than that of General Motors in the USA or of any American capitalist; and it makes Imperial Chemical Industries here look like a corner drug store.

Other Communist governments would follow in that list. It now seems clear, in fact, that the biggest capitalists in the present age are the socialist states themselves. And the biggest in the Western world are great public corporations like British Steel—state monopolies or nationalised industries. It now looks very hard to argue that more socialism means less capitalism. On the contrary, the state is the biggest capitalist that there is; and nationalisation, or public ownership, makes it bigger still.

AGAIN, socialism once meant "more power for the workers": or so many believed, whether socialist or anti-socialist. The plainest answer to that is the present contrast between the two Germanies, of East and West. If worker power means trade unions free to practise collective bargaining, then it needs to be said that such unions are totally characteristic of the capitalist West. They exist in the Federal Republic of Germany, for example, and not at all in the German Democratic Republic. No socialist state on earth allows collective bargaining; none looks like doing so; none could do so, surely, and remain socialist. None practises the co-ownership, *autogestion*, or *Mitbestimmungsrecht* characteristic of some parts of Western economies.

It may not be quite the paradox it first seemed, then, if British Labour in office opposed collective bargaining, and if the Conservatives now in office support it. An old argument has been stood on its head; or on its feet, rather, since this is where it should be. We can now see that the connection between socialism and worker power was a mistake. But it was not only, or even mainly, socialists who made that mistake.

AND THIRDLY, nationalisation or public ownership was once thought to mean "more power for

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government." I once listened to a broadcast where a number of passers-by in a London street were asked if they wanted "more nationalisation." Most of them did not. But the most striking thing about those interviews was that *everybody* believed that the nationalised industries and services were actually run by the government; and the chief argument offered against more nationalisation was that governments are just not very good at running things. In other words, nobody seemed to be aware that the state is not the same thing as government, but a far wider thing. And the nationalised industries are run by the state, not by the government, as a surprisingly large number of people have yet to notice. They are independent bodies that can ignore government advice, and sometimes do—subject, of course, to legislation and various economic controls (but then so are private firms). It is a matter for interesting debate whether, by and large, the great public corporations are more or less biddable by Ministers than the private sector.

But the true interest of this point is far wider than a verbal distinction between state and government. The events of recent years have proved utterly mistaken those of many parties who hoped, or feared, that nationalisation must mean powerful government. We live in an age of weak government. There is no lack of state ownership in Britain today: more than half the workers now affiliated to the Trades Union Congress are employed, directly or indirectly, by the state. And yet British governments have never in human memory looked so hard pressed in their struggle to control the economy, above all in the field of pay and prices. The urgent domestic problem of most Western industrial states today is to defeat inflation. It is a task that the Victorian state Lord Acton knew, owning as it did almost nothing of the economy except the Post Office, readily achieved; and one that the heavily nationalised economies of the present age finds infinitely elusive and unsure. Victorian Britain was a private economy, and almost totally inflation-free. One certain fact about nationalisation, then, is that it does not of itself increase the power of government. It merely enlarges the role of the state.

AND LASTLY, socialism was once supposed to mean "more state welfare"; and much of the argument engaged in by our parents and grandparents was about just this. It was their unquestioning assumption that more socialism must mean higher social welfare, just as anti-socialist governments were supposed to encourage self-reliance and thrift. Never a very convincing argument in Britain, where it was a Liberal government that first legislated for a welfare state; and where the Beveridge Report some thirty years later was drafted by a Liberal, Sir William Beveridge, and supported by all three political parties in the election of 1945. But it was a view widely held, none the less, and not only by socialists.

Now we know better. In the mid-1970s the city of New York was threatened with bankruptcy. At the heart of its impoverishment lay two causes: high wages and salaries, on the one hand, in the public sector; and big welfare payments on the other. Nobody doubts that New York is a "capitalist city." But it is not always noticed that Moscow and Peking do not pay pensions or other welfare provision to their public officials on the same massive scale. So public over-spending can be a "private-enterprise folly" rather than a socialist one.

Or consider universities, which are a form of welfare expenditure to the extent that they are subsidised by the taxpayer: an overwhelming extent, even in Britain. Many nations in the Western world are now over-producing graduates, to an extent unknown in the socialist world. In capitalist California most school-leavers now go to college, largely at the cost of the state: an unimaginable situation in any nation east of the Iron Curtain. Extravagant welfare spending today is something very far removed from socialism, as a matter of ordinary observation. In fact socialism now looks like an efficient way (and some would say the only efficient way) to keep welfare spending under strict control.

IT IS NOW widely accepted that our language of politics is misleading; but not everybody thinks it matters much. Some are content with a passive, spectator-like view of all this, and find it natural that words should mean whatever most people take them to mean at any given time. We may call this the Shirley Williams view of political language, since Mrs Williams, on losing her seat as a Labour MP in May 1979, announced in a newspaper ("Why We Lost—How to Win", *Observer*, 13 May 1979) that socialism really meant a number of propositions that Liberals and moderate Conservatives had been advancing for years.

The trouble with the Williams view of language is that it leaves us in the power of those who are active with words. To manipulate as feebly as this is to be out-manipulated by others. We all know

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that socialism isn't about "more adult education" or a certain kind of commitment to the European Community: you can believe in all that and belong to any British political party, or none. Our use of language needs to be, if not convincing, at least plausible. But the trouble goes deeper than that.

Suppose it really were true, as I have just argued, that socialism in the familiar, state-centred sense of the word means *less* welfare, and *less* power for ordinary people: a more rigidly controlled and more conformist social system, where party leaders behave in staid, dignified fashion and are not to be found jogging raggedly in public. If that is indeed what it means, then you would expect conservatives, in the traditional sense of that word, to want more of it—and perhaps some of them do, in a secretive way. Guy Burgess's traditionally minded mother is said to have remarked, after her son's defection: "I think Soviet discipline is *good* for Guy. . . ."

But a debate conducted secretively or in occasional hints is a misleading debate. If it is really true, as liberals have long believed, that a competitive economy is more likely to prove radical or progressive in its effects than a controlled or socialist one, then the point needs to be openly put and openly discussed. When we call socialism "left wing", we are refusing to do just that. Above all else, we owe a duty to be clear—a duty to those about to choose, who need to choose in a knowledge of what choice means. That is why those who, like Shirley Williams, still call themselves socialists need to look more honestly at why they do so. There is a limit to the old game of making words mean whatever you want them to mean, and it is time Humpty Dumpty came off the wall.

THERE IS ANOTHER and more fundamental reason to insist on a clear use of terms. There are now many who, with a battery of fashionable arguments, question whether political realities can be accurately described at all. Such fashionable arguments are by now very numerous: that all language is ideologically motivated, and political language not least; that it is class-conditioned, or genetically conditioned, or theory-laden; or that terms like "Left" and "Right" merely represent a structure or pattern of meaning which is elegant and satisfying in itself, and under no obligation to represent any reality outside itself. All these views are variants of what philosophers call knowledge-scepticism: the doctrine that it is impossible with any certainty to know anything. No perception in that view is certainly false, or true either; commitment is a matter of free personal choice—a declaration about oneself, and little else. And those who expect political language to reflect what things are, or could be, are the mere victims of an outdated assumption about the possibility of judging objectively.

Knowledge-scepticism, in one version or another, is now so widely held that it helps to explain the surprising immunity of our political language from analytical debate: the deep conservatism of our terminology, its inability to reflect the issues of the day. To speak plainly, much of our commonest political language has nothing to do with the problems that we face. Left, Right and Centre will not help you to defeat inflation. The struggle between Left and Right to control the Labour Party has about as much to do with the problems of our ailing economy as the rings of Saturn or the moons that encircle the planet Jupiter. When we talk of such matters, we are merely talking about talking. No hungry man is fed, no homeless sheltered, by whatever it is that is supposed to divide Mr Jim Callaghan from Mr Tony Benn.

It is clear, what is more, that most ordinary people know that this is so. Indeed the ordinary man doubts the language of our politics far more thoroughly, and more justly, than our intellectuals do. To this day, such trivialising terms are more or less the mark of the intellectual in politics, and they are far commoner in academic debate than on electoral platforms or in the House of Commons. The "New Left", as it called itself in the 1960s, was essentially a university movement; it lived and died as that. And to this day no British political party has ever used the words Left, or Right, or Centre as part of its title. The inaccuracy of our political language is above all an intellectual inaccuracy, in the sense of being one commonest among our intelligentsia. Most people, it seems clear, busy themselves with more immediate questions than the difference between Capitalism and Socialism on the linear spectrum. They hold strong views on party leaders as personalities, seek action on pay and prices, and respond to local issues like slum-clearance or pollution.

The biggest mistake in our debates are abstract mistakes—mistakes made by highly educated people. We are here in a world of what an American journalist once called Educated Incompetence. "You would need to be an intellectual", I once overheard somebody say

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(echoing Orwell, I suspect) "to believe anything as silly as that!" And this is not the first time we have been here. Forty years ago, after all, millions of ordinary men and women could see that Stalin was a mass murderer, and thousands of intellectuals like Burgess, Philby and Maclean—and Anthony Blunt, art historian—thought him the saviour of mankind. And we have watched mutations of the same misjudgment with Mao, Nasser, and Castro. Intellectual errors are very far from new, in politics and elsewhere; and there is no notion so absurd, as Cicero remarked 2,000 years ago, that it cannot be found in the writings of the philosophers.

KNOWLEDGE-SCEPTICISM can be answered, as it needs to be answered, in two ways. The first is that if all assertions are suspect on grounds of ideology, conditioning, and the like, then that suspicion must reach as far as the assertion that all assertions are suspect.... Dogmatic scepticism cannot claim to be miraculously exempt. If other views are no more than a matter of personal taste and personal opinion, then so too is this.

The other answer relates to the notion of commitment as free choice. Many intelligent people now believe that to commit oneself to Left or Right is a declaration of personal freedom, and that anyone who denies this is acting in an arbitrary way. We are even told that to demand sufficient evidence—or even lucid argumentation—is to deny the right of the individual to be himself or to do his own thing. To claim objectivity is somehow to injure personal freedom.

This is surely an odd view, though it helps to explain how a terminology as ramshackle as Left and Right has survived. Odd, because it assumes that freedom derives from a denial of knowledge—although it is precisely the great dictatorships of the century that have denied knowledge. Communists and Fascists are both knowledge-sceptics, though on grounds sometimes distinct: Marxists believe that personal knowledge is socially conditioned. Fascists that it is genetically so. In the totalitarian view, truth is what State or Party propose, and those who suppose they can know it for themselves are the victims of a "bourgeois illusion."

The contrast between the sceptical and the free is forcefully made by George Orwell in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. There is a moment early in that novel where the oppressed hero stiffens his resolve and writes treasonable words in his notebook. His treason is against the totalitarian state he lives under, and what he writes is this:

> "Stones are hard, water is wet, objects unsupported fall towards the earth's centre...."

And with the mind of one setting forth a mighty axiom, he then writes:

> "Freedom is the freedom to say that two plus two make four. If that is granted, all else follows."

That is the sort of courage we now need—to say that stones are hard and water wet; that state capitalism is still capitalism; and that a one-party state is tyranny, whoever that party may be. Political language can do a lot more than describe the patterns of men's minds, if we let it, and the consolations of their philosophy. It can tell us what the world is like, and how it could be different. We can deny all that, if we like, to preserve our political language as it is and keep it safe. But how safe, if we do, are we?

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*Robert Skidelsky*

# Exploding Certain Convenient Myths of the 1930s

THERE WERE two widespread reactions to the recent "Blunt Affair." The first need not detain us. This was the revulsion against Anthony Blunt in the name of the traditional loyalties which he betrayed. It was a mixed reaction whose emotional roots lie in tribal values, a philistine distrust of aesthetic culture, and the populist hatred of privilege; but whose strength reflects the contemporary disenchantment with a left-inclining, tender-minded intelligentsia, whose alleged antipathy to patriotism, the domestic virtues, the work-ethic, and business profits is felt to have brought Britain to its present sorry pass. Analysis of this type of response can be left to the political sociologist of contemporary Britain. Here it is sufficient to say that the "simple" loyalties and virtues in whose name Blunt has been attacked have always been problematic to the thinking person, and never more so than in the aftermath of the First World War, when it was rightly seen that traditional, stereotyped, responses to new situations had inflicted on Europe a disaster unparalleled since the Thirty Years War.

The second reaction, that of survivors of the Marxist or the Communist generation of the 1930s (the two terms were much more interchangeable than they are now), deserves closer attention from the historian. It is surprising that no one—except Philip Toynbee—actually defended what Blunt was prepared to do. For on certain assumptions, which were shared by the whole Marxist generation of that time, there could be no moral objection to spying for the Soviet Union. Moreover, it is clear from the published comment by some survivors of this generation on the Blunt Affair that many of their assumptions about that period are still vigorously held today. The facts which continue to define for Philip Toynbee the reality of the 1930s are "a group of heartless politicians . . . two million unemployed . . . appeasing the rampant Fascist régimes in Germany and Italy", and "rapidly expanding" Fascist sympathies in Britain (*Observer*, 25 November 1979).

Or take the letter to *The Times* of 23 November 1979 from Professor Eric Burhop (FRS; eminent scientist; Trinity College, Cambridge undergraduate; and Communist sympathiser of the 1930s). "Huge unemployment, malnutrition, the dole, means test, hunger marchers—these were the realities of the time." Capitalism "had failed." Nazism "appeared the most evil thing any of us had seen." The British Government was "hell-bent on appeasing Hitler." "The only force that stood staunchly against Nazism . . . was the Soviet Union and its Red Army." Given these facts it was hardly surprising that "the brightest spirits of our universities" turned to Marxist solutions. As James Hemming remembers it (*The Guardian*, 23 November 1979):

> "the establishments of all central Europe were sympathetic to Hitler and Co. as the only means of checking communism and controlling labour. In Spain, a democratically elected government had been overthrown by the Franco-Hitler axis with barely a cheep from the Western powers. Italy was securely fascist under Mussolini. France was rotten with quislings. In the East End, the police were supporting the Mosleyites against the Communists. . . . Nor should we forget that the Soviet-German alliance was forced on Russia as a means of buying time



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after the pusillanimous collapse of the League of Nations."

What is remarkable to the historian is how resolutely this "world view" of the 1930s has survived the assault of historical evidence. Its essential elements are: the horrors and despair of Depression and mass unemployment; the intellectual and moral bankruptcy of Capitalism; the menace and spread of Fascist barbarism; the pro-fascist leanings of the Establishment and Government; the pusillanimous or sinister appeasement of Hitler; the progressive anti-fascist, anti-capitalist, alternative being developed in the USSR; and Communism (including the Soviet Army) as the embodiment of the will to resist fascism and preserve civilisation. If all this were true, to spy for the Soviet Union, had the opportunity arisen, would have been the plainest duty. "I would undoubtedly have accepted that proposition with pride", writes Toynbee, "even with joy." The crucial point which needs to be made is that the facts were very far from being as the Marxist generation saw them. The fundamental criticism of Blunt is not that, given his convictions, he spied for the Soviet Union, but that he and the rest of the Marxist generation were political simpletons. They took a very small selection of the available facts of their time, and imposed on them rigid and absurd interpretations.

IT REMAINS an article of faith to the Marxist generation that the 1930s were for Britain a decade of unrelieved economic misery and despair. This is simply not true. No one would deny that the Great Depression of 1929–1933 was the greatest shock that the world economic system has ever experienced; or that Britain was profoundly affected by it. During the depth of the Depression in 1932 unemployment in Britain reached 2.9m, or 22.8% of the insured labour force. However, from 1933 onwards there was a steady recovery (briefly interrupted in the winter of 1937–38) so that John Stevenson and Chris Cook in their recent study[1] could conclude that

"most people were better off by 1939 than they had been ten years earlier."

Between 1933 and 1937 inclusive the British economy grew at 4% a year, unemployment fell from 22.8% to 9.5%, and output, real wages, and the real value of social services (including unemployment benefits) rose above their 1929 level. It was in these years that the transformation from a 19th-century economy based on cotton, coal, ship-building, and railway construction to an economy based on housebuilding, mass consumption, and service industries was largely accomplished. "Distressed Areas" remained, and these were dreadful blots. From today's perspective, far too many people were ill-fed, ill-clothed, and ill-housed. But the relevant standards of comparison were with what had existed before; and from this perspective, the improvement is clear.

It may be argued that this improvement only became apparent with hindsight: that the "realities of the times" *seemed* as Professor Burhop described them. But for most people they did *not* seem so. Extremist movements such as Fascism and Communism were numerically insignificant. The "Hunger Marches" attracted only tiny numbers. Much more important was the political dominance of the Conservative Party throughout the decade. The huge "National" majority of 1931 can perhaps be explained by a panicky "flight to the Right"; not so the election result of 1935 which gave the Conservatives a majority of 200, and in which Labour's failure to recover lost support in the booming Midlands was particularly significant. "In 1939", Paul Addison writes, "Labour . . . looked all set to lose another general election."[2] These political reactions reflected the solid gains of the decade.

RAYMOND ARON has drawn attention to the flaw of democratic systems—incapable of monstrous action, but allowing monstrous phenomena. It should be noted that during the worst years of the Depression, when the Soviet Union was widely praised for having "abolished" unemployment, Russia was a monstrous society in both senses of the word. There was widespread famine, and Stalin liquidated the kulaks, both accounting for millions of lives. To allow millions of people to remain unemployed, though cushioned by the dole, is horrible; but to kill millions, or allow them to die, is surely far worse. Even at its nadir, the moment at which it compared least favourably with the Soviet Union, world capitalism was far less monstrous than Bolshevism as an *economic system*—quite apart from the latter's denial of basic human rights and civil liberties to which attention had been drawn by Keynes, Bertrand

[1] John Stevenson and Chris Cook, *The Slump: Society and Politics During the Depression* (1978), p. 5.

[2] Paul Addison, *The Road to 1945* (1975), p. 15.

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Russell, and so many others. And this was all before the insane purges of the mid-1930s which opened yet another window on the reality of life under Stalin.

A CENTRAL BELIEF of the Marxist generation was that capitalism was bankrupt, and that its sole remaining resource was fascism. Wrong again!

That there were grave faults in the functioning of an unregulated market economy was obvious to most thinking people. That a system based on individual greed was both morally unlovely and produced unjust results were propositions widely accepted: they were the inspiration of the whole movement of social reform. But the view that capitalist democracy had no self-correcting or self-improving potential could have been, and was, held only by the most arrogant, ignorant, and foolish persons. One of the historical facts, and puzzles, of the 1930s is that the out-of-date, and virtually incomprehensible, economic theorising of a 19th-century German émigré had a greater pull over Trinity College, Cambridge, than the eminently sane, generous, exciting, and lucid commentaries emanating from King's College, Cambridge, a stone's throw away.

> "The prevailing world depression, the enormous anomaly of unemployment in a world full of wants, the disastrous mistakes we have made, blind us to what is going on under the surface—to the true interpretation of the trend of things. For I predict that both of the two opposed errors of pessimism which now make so much noise in the world will be proved wrong in our own time—the pessimism of the revolutionaries who think that things are so bad that nothing can save us but violent change, and the pessimism of the reactionaries who consider the balance of our economic and social life so precarious that we must risk no experiments."

So wrote J. M. Keynes in 1930.[3] The eventually successful search for a "middle way" between the two "errors"—by Keynes and others in England, by the New Dealers in the United States, by the *hauts fonctionnaires* in France, by the Social Democrats in Sweden, by Henri de Man in Belgium—testifies to the intellectual and moral vitality of capitalist democracy in its period of crisis, a vitality which has not yet been fully explored by historians, who have tended to concentrate on the sterile intellectualising of the Marxist generation.

BUT, IT WILL BE SAID, Keynes's optimism of 1930 predates Hitler's accession to power in Germany which changed everything. From 1933, the duty of "resisting fascism" took priority over everything else. Marxism was the only ideology, Communism the only political movement, the Soviet Union the only military and industrial force, willing and able to mount such a resistance. Hence the most famous false antithesis of the 1930s, "Communism or Fascism", by which the stand of the Marxist generation is ultimately justified.

The first step in demolishing this proposition is to point out the false chain of reasoning which supported it. The most important link in the chain was the assertion that capitalism could survive only on a fascist (i.e., a terroristic or violent dictatorial) basis. Consequently, domestic and international relations would be simplified, and polarised, into a straightforward confrontation between Fascism and Communism. It was into this process of polarisation that the Marxist generation fitted the Spanish Civil War, the appeasement of Hitler by the National Government, the international role of the Soviet Union. In fact, the analysis was little better than nonsense, and was seen to be so by most thoughtful people at the time.

From a purely theoretical point of view, the maintenance of capitalism did not require fascism. To assert the contrary was to deny any creative role to intelligence and democracy. It was also wildly implausible as a statement about what was happening in the real world. In the 1930s fascist movements made little headway in the United States or Western Europe: the phenomenon was largely confined to Central and Eastern Europe. Corporatist, planning, and authoritarian ideas certainly had some vogue on the Right (and also on the Left) of democratic politics; but such ideas could be equated with Hitlerism only by the most perverse stretch of the imagination. Nor did the Spanish Civil War have any real connection with the Marxist scenario. Franco's uprising had little to do either with the problems of "Spanish capitalism", or with political issues outside Spain—the latter at least was proved by Spain's neutrality in World War II. (Even the role of the Spanish Civil War as a testing ground for Axis weaponry and

[3] J. M. Keynes, "Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren", in *Essays in Persuasion*, Collected Writings Vol. IX, p. 322.

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strategy has been greatly exaggerated.)[4] That the Franco régime turned out to be a particularly unpleasant clerical-military dictatorship did not justify the star billing given to the Spanish Civil War at the time, any more than the fact that British Communists fought and died heroically in Spain absolves the historian from pointing out (as did Orwell, much censured at the time) that "the cause" for which they died was not as they perceived it. One can perhaps be a hero without understanding what is happening.

The problem of "resisting fascism" boiled down to the problem of preventing Germany from establishing a hegemony over Europe—a project which would have endangered Britain's security. As A. J. P. Taylor pointed out long ago, the dominating international issue of the 1930s was "the German problem", not the fascist problem. German fascism, or Nazism, was a hegemonial instrument for realising expansionist aims. In Walter Lippmann's phrase, Nazism was "the elaborate and intense militarisation of a people for a war of conquest."[5] Nor was this project the outcome of any "objective" crisis of German capitalism, either before or during Nazi rule; but rather of an interaction between the general economic difficulties of the time, "pre-capitalist" values which had retained an exceptional hold on traditional German society, and the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles, (particularly its annulment of Germany's victory over Russia in 1918). As for Mussolini's original fascist régime, the worst that can be said against it was that it was repressive and uncreative, and harboured imperialist ambitions much more modest than those pursued by Britain and France down to the end of the First World War. The crucial point is that there was little or no basis in contemporary reality for interpreting international events in terms of an ideological struggle between Communism and Fascism, or even between democracy and fascism. There was a special German problem dating from the 1890s: a peculiar Japanese problem dating from the same period; and a minor Italian problem. The first two were sufficiently serious to bring about another World War; but they were basically susceptible to analysis and treatment in terms of classic balance-of-power theory; and it was neglect of these considerations which contributed mightily to the eventual catastrophe.

Indeed, from the point of view of containing Germany, adherence to Marxist theory and Communist practice was massively counterproductive. The project of "resisting fascism" might at least have suggested the rearmament of democratic Britain. But it did no such thing—because from the Marxist perspective the National Government was a potential if not actual part of the Fascist International, and must therefore be deprived of arms. Thus, in practice "resisting fascism" meant *not*

[4] "The third volume of documents from the archives of the German Foreign Ministry . . . contains little evidence of a Fascist conspiracy and none at all of British or French connivance in it." "Spain and the Axis" in A. J. P. Taylor, *Rumours of War* (1952).

[5] Walter Lippmann, *The Good Society* (1943 ed.), p.64.

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resisting Hitler (whose rise to power had actually been facilitated by the German *KPD* on impeccable dialectical grounds: the anti-Nazi Social Democrats were re-defined as "social-fascists"), but resisting the admittedly inadequate efforts of the National Government to rearm Britain against Hitler. Such were the consequences of Marxism's distorting spectacles.

ONE OF THE HARDIEST MYTHS of the 1930s is that the National Government, and more generally "the Establishment", was "pro-fascist." This led to the "appeasement" of fascism, at home and abroad. Such views have little contact with reality. The chief determinants of the appeasement policy were the state of public opinion at home and in the Dominions (and this includes the highly ambiguous attitude of the Left to rearmament); the need to balance the accumulating weaknesses of a declining power—strategic, military, and economic—against imperial and global commitments inherited from the days of Britain's supremacy; and, finally, a failure of nerve at the time of Munich which allowed Hitler to outbluff Chamberlain. One might have thought (as Senator Harry Truman was later to argue) that *Realpolitik* should seek to involve Germany in an exhausting war against Russia: diplomats have not usually regarded it as an error to divert one's enemies to other targets. But there is no evidence that this is what Chamberlain was trying to do.

Admittedly, neither the British nor the French were keen for an alliance with the Soviet Union, and this has often been held to be convincing proof that they were not serious about opposing Hitler. But the obstacles in the way of an Anglo-Soviet alliance had nothing to do with the British Government's alleged pro-fascist proclivities. First of all, as historians have recorded, Russia itself in these years was "the scene of the most nightmarish, Orwellian orgies of modern totalitarianism" (George Kennan). Secondly, the governments of the countries most threatened by Hitler did not want to be protected against him by the Soviet Army, itself a force of dubious value in the aftermath of the 1936–38 purges. Thirdly, the price demanded by Stalin for an alliance was extremely high: handing over to Russia the Baltic states; and compelling Poland and Rumania to accept Soviet troops on their territory if (in the opinion of Stalin) the situation warranted it. One did not have to be pro-fascist to have hesitations about going to war to "defend the independence of small nations" on such terms, and in such company.

The fact is that Stalin was no more committed to the Versailles (and post-Versailles) settlement in Eastern Europe than Hitler was. But only Hitler could give him part at least of what he wanted—on the basis of a division of the spoils. And Stalin was quite capable of the *Realpolitik* strategy of which Western leaders were accused by Western Marxists but from which they in fact shrank: i.e. turning Germany the other way. It was these long-term considerations, rather than a purely tactical effort to "buy time", which determined Stalin to reach agreement with Germany. He "obviously thought that the pact had value, not only as an immediate manoeuvre, but over a long period."[6] Like everyone else, he was taken by surprise by Hitler's rapid victory in the West.

TO SUMMARISE: the Marxist generation was wrong about the condition of the economy, wrong about the intellectual resourcefulness of capitalist democracy, wrong about the Spanish civil war, wrong about the nature of the menace facing the West, wrong about the motives of the British Government, wrong about the Soviet Union. Confronted by systematic error of this kind, one is naturally driven to seek the source, or sources, of such distortion. The circumstances of the time cannot of themselves explain the appeal of communism to a section of Britain's intelligentsia. What needs to be explained is why the circumstances were perceived as they were.

THE ANSWER to such a question cannot be simple. But I think John Maynard Keynes put his finger on the essential point when he remarked to Roy Harrod on the "recrudescence of the ancient strain of Puritanism in our blood."[7] The one misleading word in this acute phrase is "recrudescence." From the standpoint of Bloomsbury, the dogmatic-theological mood of the Marxist generation might well appear to be a "recrudescence" of vanished Victorian instincts. But from a wider perspective, Bloomsbury's own anti-Puritan ethic, with its emphasis on "the arts" and "personal relations" (to which was added in the 1920s a doctrine of "self-expression" derived from Freud), was by no means the most characteristic

[6] A. J. P. Taylor, *The Origins of the Second World War* (Penguin ed.), p.319. See also George F. Kennan, *Russia and the West* (1961), pp.312–3.

[7] R. F. Harrod, *The Life of John Maynard Keynes* (1951), p.451.

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way out of Victorianism for the educated middle class. On the whole, the Puritan instincts of this class were not abolished, but re-directed towards politics, particularly left-wing politics. This seems to me to be the right context in which to consider the Marxist generation of the 1930s.

If we try to see the period 1880 to 1945 as a whole, we become aware of a remarkable coincidence between social and economic crisis and the loss of religious belief. This crisis of faith was particularly acute for those whose upbringing had been more than conventionally religious—for the sons and daughters of clergymen and Nonconformist families. It also hit those with a "need to believe" which could no longer be satisfied by orthodox religion.

From the 1880s onwards a massive transfer of moral and intellectual energy took place from the service of God to the service of Humanity. Underlying this transfer was a fusion of the sense of personal sin with a sense of social guilt. It was not, as Beatrice Webb said, that social questions had taken the place of religious questions—they had *become* religious questions. And with the collapse of the old faith came a search for a new "Religion of Humanity", a gospel of Progress with secure doctrinal foundations. A great deal of the middle-class input into the late Victorian reform movement can be explained in these terms. The progression from loss of faith to dedication to social causes can be traced in the lives of almost every late Victorian, middle-class reformer; the intellectual "systems" of men like L. T. Hobhouse and J. A. Hobson are essentially substitutions of evolutionary for Christian theology.

The Marxist commitment of the 1930s was, of course, an ideological response to the social, economic, and international problems of that decade. But it was also a spiritual revolt against old faiths which no longer seemed adequate by a generation which had been brought up to believe in *something*. There was Christianity itself, which had enjoyed a powerful revival in the 1920s, in reaction to the amoral and destructive activism of World War I. A number of Marxist millenarians of the 1930s came from church or religious backgrounds.[8] Others were children of late Victorian social reformers, who had lost their belief in the "evolutionary" creeds which had been their parents' substitute for religious belief, and who needed to establish the "gospel of progress" on securer foundations. Still others were in revolt against the aesthetic theories, and even more, the aesthetic credo, which had been Bloomsbury's substitute for religion.[9] To an educated middle-class generation near enough to the Victorian age to need a secular religion, Communism, in the circumstances of the 1930s, provided a faith, a cause, a theology, a morality, a church—and, in reborn revolutionary Russia, an example of a new heaven on earth.

TRYING TO "EXPLAIN" the Marxist commitment of the 1930s rather than accepting it as a reasonable (or at least rational) interpretation of the events of the time will always seem objectionable to some who still fancy themselves as "the best and the brightest" of the day. My only justification is that the systematic misinterpretation of these events—a misinterpretation which was confined to a small minority of young middle-class intellectuals—leaves something to be explained. It also provokes a reflection about the kind of political attitudes most conducive to a tolerable state of society.

I used to believe millenarianism was a necessary ingredient in politics: for without it what large motive for hopeful reform would exist? I am less sure today. Could it not be that we have in democracy and market economy mechanisms whose *tendency* is to bring about improvement in social conditions? . . . provided always that public life continues to attract men and women of high skill and creative intelligence without which no society, or civilisation, can master its problems? If this is so, it would certainly be wiser to seek non-political spheres of endeavour for the religious, theological, aesthetic, and putatively heroic sides of our nature.

In this light the Marxist commitment of the 1930s cannot be seen as that generation's "finest hour." If to condemn some of them as traitors is simple-minded, no less so is the myth that they were betrayed by Stalin. It is not that they were wrong about Russia: they were wrong about their own civilisation.

[8] Donald Maclean was a lapsed Scottish Calvinist; Anthony Blunt, Cecil Day-Lewis, Louis MacNeice and others had clerical parents. Joseph Needham saw Communism as a secular expression of Christian ethics. See Neal Wood, *Communism and British Intellectuals* (1959), pp.64–69, 80.

[9] Julian Bell, the son of Vanessa and Clive Bell, is an example of this reaction. Bloomsbury's theories were inappropriate in an age of "unemployment, economic crisis, nascent fascism and approaching war" (Peter Stansky and William Abrahams, *Journey to the Frontier* (1966), pp.94–95). Marxists like Bell and Auden, while theoretically committed to fighting against "War", were fascinated by violence. They made politics a moral arena for the waging of the "just war"—against fascism.

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# Is There a Nazi Mystery?

## By Raymond Aron

THE NAZI QUESTION belongs to the historians now; the Soviet (or Stalinist) question is still with us. What used to be a standard comparison during the decade-and-a-half after World War II, the linking of Nazism with Sovietism, has become debatable to say the least. The Third Reich lasted for only thirteen years—six-and-a-half years of peace (or rather of preparation for war), then the military hostilities between September 1939 and May 1945. The régime created by Lenin and his Bolshevik companions recently celebrated its 62nd anniversary. The current men in power in Moscow are practically untouched by the *ancien régime*, and did not play any important part in the revolution and the civil war. And we shall never know what the second or third generation of Hitlerites would have been or done, or what kind of National Socialist Germany and what kind of "New Europe" would have emerged from the victory of the Third Reich.

Must we then abandon altogether the "theory of Totalitarianism" so popular in the days of the Cold War, and now considered outmoded? Are we to decree that the two revolutions, red and brown, have nothing or next-to-nothing in common? Or do we take Nazism as a sub-variety of fascism and deal separately with communism, the only 20th-century revolution to have survived and produced a social order? These questions came to mind as I read Pierre Ayçoberry's book,[1] which examines the interpretations of National Socialism from 1922 to 1975, and which concludes by calling for further investigations. Some 46 years after its victory, and 34 years after its defeat, can Nazism still be mysterious?

I WAS LIVING in Berlin on that evening of 30 January 1933 when Hitler appeared on the Chancellery balcony, cheered by thousands of supporters flushed with victory. Among the various French members of the *französiches Akademiker Haus*, an intense debate centred on the question of whether this was a revolution, or perhaps even a Revolution. A number of them, possibly a majority, said no; these were men of the Left, unwilling to relinquish their ideal image of *La Révolution*, meaning 1789 or 1917. Hitler had been appointed chancellor by the President of the Republic; he stood at the head of a parliamentary majority; and he did not represent "a class" conscious of itself (neither the various Industrial Tycoons, such as Thyssen who had given him money, nor the petty-bourgeoisie which manned his party and expanded his electoral constituency). All revolutions since the 18th century (and perhaps since the 17th century if you counted the English Civil War) had been inspired by "progressive" philosophies. Liberals and socialists used the same vocabulary and preached the same values. Was it legitimate to speak of revolution, or, failing that, of counter-revolution, when the ideologues of the Nazi movement rejected the heritage of the Enlightenment, denied the class struggle, glorified racial purity, and argued that farmers and peasants should keep their roots in the soil?

I was one of those who argued the thesis of "revolution." The word indicates a sudden change, accompanied by a greater or lesser degree of violence, and substituting one political class, ideology, or way of government for another.

In that sense, if not after March 1933 then surely after June 1934, National Socialism in power achieved a revolution, and certainly not a restoration. In 1815 the Restoration in France consolidated the major effects of the social upheaval of the preceding decades at the same time as reviving some relics of the pre-revolutionary régime. "Counter-revolution" too is sometimes genuinely revolutionary. The tendency to make a radical distinction between the two derives from an implicit philosophy of history: if you postulate that history always marches in the same direction, then heading

[1] Pierre Ayçoberry, *La question nazie—Les interprétations du national-socialisme 1922–1975* (Editions du Seuil).



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the other way becomes by definition a "counter"-movement. But not by the same token a step backwards; rather a drastic move in a direction opposed to the optimistic, humanitarian concept of history.

THE NAZI IDEOLOGY belonged to a whole family of ideologies presenting themselves as both national and social. To the German adherents of the so-called "conservative revolution", the Hitlerites appeared dangerously similar to the Marxists. Despite the diversity of people and doctrines, national Revolution contained a number of themes common to all those who claimed allegiance to it. They denounced the same enemies—Individualism, abstract or utilitarian Rationalism (of the French or the British), the Class Struggle (as an inevitable consequence of individualism), and Marxism (the product of the Enlightenment and retaining its liberal ideals, though choosing a different path towards them). A more or less virulent admixture of anti-Semitism was also to be found in these circles, all quite clearly unified by their condemnation of the Treaty of Versailles and by their chauvinism.

Hitler would probably not have pulled it off had it not been for the alliance between the new Nazis and the old traditionalists. But I never supposed that, once in power, he would obey his financial backers, or that he would respect the ways and customs of the civil servants or generals whom he needed in order to govern the Reich or win a World War. Far more than Louis-Napoléon, Hitler belonged to the Bohemian social fringe; he recruited his cronies and his tight-knit personal staff from among semi-intellectuals or failed intellectuals (Goebbels, Rosenberg) and half-pay soldiers or adventurers (Röhm, Goering). With very few exceptions, in 1933 the *Reichswehr* generals, the members of the *Herrenklub*, despised and sometimes even detested the corporal. But it was a member of the *Herrenklub*, Franz von Papen, who pulled the strings in the final plot which brought Hitler into the Chancellery, having become convinced that there was no chance of liquidating the Weimar Republic and the Treaty of Versailles without the party which had at last succeeded in mobilising the masses.

THAT THE Third Reich would not restore a more or less Wilhelmine empire—and would not fulfil the ideal of Oswald Spengler in *Preussentum und Sozialismus*—was in my view a self-evident forecast. In any case Spengler held stern views about this "plebeian" movement, and the *Völkischer Beobachter* attacked him on several occasions. What kind of society and political régime would emerge in the aftermath of the storm I did not claim to know. Besides, I seldom asked myself that question, because what did seem as predictable to me as an event can possibly be was that the Hitler adventure would result in a full-scale European conflict. Not that I thought it impossible to stop him before the point when his activities provoked Anglo-French resistance and then war. In 1933 Pilsudski asked the French about the eventuality of military intervention against a still disarmed Germany. He repeated the question in 1936, when the forces of the *Reichswehr* entered the demilitarised zone on the left bank of the Rhine. In the years between 1933 and 1936, France had the means to call a halt to the Hitler adventure—but what leader in the France of that period would have had the courage and the political and moral authority necessary to take responsibility for such a step? The French and British did not resign themselves to standing up against the *Führer* until after the *Reichswehr* entered Prague. By giving Poland their guarantee, the British encouraged the Hitler-Stalin Pact while committing themselves to fight for another far-away country wiped off the face of the map after a few weeks of hostilities.

I DID NOT HAVE THE TIME between 1933 and 1936 to study Hitler's Germany and Stalin's Russia. But I did have the good fortune to know Hermann Rauschning and to read his books *The Revolution of Nihilism* and *Hitler Told Me*; and I also read Boris Souvarine's fine study of *Stalin* (all books still worth reading today). Later on, during the War, I got hold of Franz Neumann's important *Behemoth* and learned about the conflicts which racked the Third Reich behind the façade and the fiction of a monolithic régime.

The ideas deducible from the pre-War European press are not at all contradicted by post-War historical writing. Hitler quickly liquidated the old-style German Nationalists (*die Deutschnationalen*) who had given him his majority in the *Reichstag*. He gave way to some Army pressure in June 1934. Until the very end of his reign he had indeed to reckon with opposition from certain German military groups. We do not know the details of the plots against Blomberg and Fritsch early in 1938, but the changes in the High Command that year revealed the subterranean tensions between the *Führer* and the *Reichswehr* chiefs.

The book subsequently published by Franz Neumann argued a case which today goes unopposed. The Nazi party had neither the time nor the capacity to create a new society radically different from the one which had been shaken but not broken by war, inflation, and crisis. The army, industry, and bureaucracy were not really Nazified. The organisations set up by the Party stood alongside the State organisations without replacing

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them or even always removing their role or influence.

To be sure, after March 1933 the word *Gleichschaltung* became the official slogan of Hitler's Revolution, and press and radio were "coordinated" without meeting any real opposition. The Party easily secured a monopoly of "the media of mass communication." But as the historians record, it only partially succeeded in bringing the universities to heel. In the spring of 1933 the motion of support for the *Führer* gained only 960 signatures out of the 7,000 professors and senior lecturers. Under the Third Reich, one-third of Germany's teachers were dismissed or retired (and as many as 45% among the historians). The universities escaped real Nazification because the political authorities, torn between their desire for uniformity and a last remnant of respect for scientific criteria, were unable to find enough candidates from the Party ranks who would be capable of claiming a chair without too much ridicule.[2]

DURING THE YEARS OF "the struggle for power", the comparison between the two extremist parties, Nazi and Communist, came to our minds unbidden—revolution of the Right versus revolution of the Left. The National Socialist Party was, after all, modelled on the social democratic or communist parties—a mass party, with its emblems, banners, shock troops, and unofficial organisations for all social activities. It improved on the recruiting and training techniques first used by the socialists in the 1880s and '90s. But another comparison came to mind, and that was with Fascism, which was also a revolution of the Right (anti-liberal, anti-rationalist, and similarly allied to "big capital"). With the onset of that era, two theses now opposed each other in dialectical tournament: was National Socialism one of the varieties of totalitarianism or of fascism?

HISTORICALLY, the origins of Nazism had little in common with those of Sovietism. The first six years of Bolshevism stood for a *coup d'état*, civil war, "war communism", famine, the Kronstadt mutiny, and finally the New Economic Policy. The Bolsheviks, a minority group in the country, seized the power that was "lying in the streets" after the fall of Czarism, and attempted to realise their utopian vision of the good society. They came up against the resistance of people (and of their "human social nature"), and triumphed over their enemies by dint of force. In order to revive their failing country they were eventually resigned to restoring a modicum of liberty to peasants and small businessmen (for the Nazi revolution, the temporal equivalent of the NEP is the War).

National Socialist ideology did not contain anything like Marxism, *Das Kapital* and the socialist models of economics or social structure. The restoration of hereditarily entailed *Erbhof* farms represented nostalgia for a pre-industrial Germany; perhaps it even echoed certain geopolitical themes, in particular those of Karl Haushofer. The invectives against *Zinsknechtsschaft* (usurious enslavement) go back to Luther and medieval Christianity. The defence of small businessmen, artisans, and entrepreneurs against the *Konzern*, the big combine, was in tune with the feelings of a sizeable section of German voters and of the Nazi militants. But, essentially, Hjalmar Schacht's management of the German economy paid no attention to Nazi Party doctrine. Probably without knowing it, he implemented a policy of Keynesianism, in an economy whose external relations were supervised by the government and whose currency was negotiated at several rates of exchange.

WITHIN A FEW YEARS Dr Schacht's policy succeeded in restoring millions of unemployed to work while maintaining price stability. Since then, economists have examined the statistics in order to determine which social classes "profited the most" out of the régime. In my view such research is of little or no interest. Capitalism, defined by the ownership of the means of production, was not seriously affected. Rearmament and large-scale public works favoured the industrial magnates. On the other hand state controls on business limited managerial freedom of action, just as import controls limited the spending freedom left to those with high incomes. The Hitlerite state had no reason to deprive itself of the services of the established industrialists.

WHY THE PARALLEL with the Soviet Union rather than with Fascism? Père Fessard used to highlight the "intrinsic deceit" of communism, and found the same quality in Nazism. Both movements installed police-state régimes in furtherance of a distant objective, and proclaimed a total and inherently unattainable unity in the name of a Class or a Race. They were terroristic régimes not by accident but by necessity, indeed as a consequence of their own doctrine. Quite apart from the religious dialectic of Père Fessard, the two Party-States both exercised the same monopoly over the legitimate spoken and written word, and the same monopoly over political activity.

Against the standard objection that the Reich's economy was still a "capitalist" on

[2] See K. F. Werner, *Die N.S. Geschichtsbild und die deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft* (Stuttgart, 1967).

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that the "social hierarchy" persisted, Hermann Rauschning's book provided the answer. Conservatism was not the essence but only the appearance of the Reich. It was not a case of big capital enlisting the National Socialists in the service of its own objectives, but of Hitler manipulating all the country's social organisations into an adventure which was both undefined and vague. To be sure, the notion of Nihilism is an equivocal one, but what Rauschning meant seemed clear to me. Hitler stood at the opposite pole from those who sought a conservative revolutionary path to an organic, traditional order.

Restoring the monarchy or "rebuilding structures capable of accommodating the rootless masses" was of no concern to Hitler. He believed in the purity of a race and dreamed of a Germanic empire dominating Europe and then perhaps the world. Rauschning was a Christian and a traditionalist; he applied the word nihilism pejoratively to a philosophy of conquest by a "superior race." He despised the vision of a *Reich* in which "pure Aryans" would rule (and reproduce themselves according to the lessons of eugenics), while the culture of the past and of Christianity would disappear.

AT THAT TIME I accepted both the notion of the "one-party régime" (Fascist Italy or Nazi Germany) and that of "secular religions", which I first developed in *La France libre* in 1944. In Britain during the War we felt bound to practise a certain amount of self-censorship, and we did not deal as freely with Stalin's Russia as with Hitler's Germany. However, two articles of 1944 carry the main burden of the matter. How close is the relationship between the two revolutions, Communist and Nazi? This question overlaps with the different question of totalitarianism. I tried then to outline the contest between the secular religions, the hyper-rational church of Marxism and in response to it the essentially irrational church of National Socialism. According to one, the contradictions of capitalism entail revolution and, in accordance with the laws of history, the advent of socialism. In the dogma of the other, it is the will of men, the vitality of the race, and not some anonymous economic determinism, which governs the course of history.

I proposed to baptise as "*religions séculières*" those doctrines which take the place of faith in the contemporary mind, and which locate man's salvation here on earth, in a far-off future, in the form of a social order yet to be created. As religions of salvation, these doctrines lay down the supreme values, and these are embodied in an earthly goal and a missionary party. Thus the zealots of these religions can embrace an unconditional Machiavellianism in all good conscience. Everything which is useful to Hitler or to Stalin is good. Both doctrines, National Socialist and Marxist, offer a historical perspective. Both interpret past, present, and future in their own way. They ordain the truth, and demonstrate it through action.

GETTING ON FOR forty years after those articles on secular religions, National Socialism is an inexhaustible historical topic, and Communism or Sovietism is still with us. How far have they borne out or corrected my experiences as a witness in 1930–33, and my reactions as an observer between 1933 and 1945? What questions are left open by the scholarly literature of the historic epochs of Adolf Hitler and of Joseph Stalin?

## *Varieties of Explanation*

IS, THEN, THE QUESTION of Nazism still an open one? Is there still a debate on the nature of National Socialism? In one sense, the question answers itself—the debate does go on and on. But can an interpretation be verified or refuted by the accumulation of facts, scholarly research, and the methods of our social sciences? What constitutes "the question of Nazism"? What are the questions which we are entitled to ask, and which call for possible reply?

Suppose that a historian formulates the question: Why, and in what circumstances, did a highly civilised nation surrender itself to a demagogue like Hitler, and follow him to the bitter end, almost to the point of national suicide? Put in this way, the Nazi question will never receive a satisfactory answer; or rather (and this comes to the same thing) it may receive several answers none of which is totally wrong but which do not give satisfaction even taken all together. On the other hand, in response to most of the questions "*why*? " which concern single aspects of the Nazi phenomenon, historiography does provide plausible or demonstrable answers.

Out of all the various movements and ideologies of "national revolution", why was it that National Socialism mobilised millions of voters and activists while the others degenerated into sects? Because Hitler proved to be a charismatic leader; because, unlike the rest, he applied tried and tested propaganda techniques; because he found a language suited to the expectations of each group; because his themes (nationalism, condemnation of monopolies and of international capitalism, the defence of "the little man") found an echo among the middle classes, which were the most disoriented and most receptive. In Germany, neither the people nor the Establishment's ruling circles had accepted

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the Treaty of Versailles. The nationalist tide began to rise before the 1929 crisis and unemployment. But between the 1928 elections and those of September 1930 came the collapse of the economy, and the tenfold increase in National Socialist voters in the space of two years owed a great deal to the crisis.

The German Nationalists did not manage to become a mass party. In post-World War I Europe, a reaction which was seen as some kind of a restoration had little chance of success. Possibly the leaders of industry (and particularly of heavy industry) may have preferred Franz von Papen to Adolf Hitler, but even if General Schleicher had not torpedoed the von Papen experiment, it was doomed in advance.

Why did Hitler gain the chancellorship through a legal process? Because the parliamentary system was paralysed. With the Communist Party dead set on opposition, and the German National and National Socialist parties determined to unseat the parties loyal to the constitution (namely the Social Democrats and the Centre), no other solution remained after the failures of von Papen and Schleicher except a government of national coalition. Brüning's dismissal by the aged Marshal Hindenburg in 1932 and von Papen's dismissal of the Social Democrat government of Prussia in July of the same year produced an impasse from which only Hitler offered a way out. The financial backing he got from certain industrialists and bankers helped him on his way. The ingrained hostility of the representatives of big capitalism towards not only the Communists but also the Social Democrats, and the Communists' unrelenting struggle against the "social traitors" on the left also laid the ground for the national revolution.

What relationship does scholarly research suggest between the parliamentary or electoral state of play on the one hand, and the economic and social situation? The German economy had been harder hit by the crisis than had most of the other countries of Europe. The prosperity of the years prior to 1929 had been financed by the influx of foreign and particularly of American capital, and withdrawal of that capital involved savage deflation and massive unemployment. The Brüning government conducted a pre-Keynesian policy, and its successors did not break with that policy, which was a hopeless one in the short term. Conflicts of interest between the various sections of the economy—the *Junker* land-owners of the East, the Ruhr coal- or steel-owners of the West, big industry and small businesses—were unresolved. The official representatives of economic interests had not worked out a recovery plan, nor had they consciously and actively wanted to see National Socialism come to power. The economic crisis and the state of confusion among the people created what German historians have accepted to be a "political vacuum." The duration of the Depression split up civil society and left only these alternatives; to hang on and wait for the economic recovery which would come in the wake of an improvement in the world situation, or else to hand power over to Hitler, to a government which could "fill the vacuum", or "start afresh" or "cut the Gordian knot."

The recruitment of the voters, activists, and leadership of the *NSDAP* remains to be investigated, as do the exact details of which economic interests were influential in which direction and under which circumstances. I doubt if further information will greatly alter the present picture. It was from the so-called middle classes that the *NSDAP* drew most of its support (although the majority of Socialist and Communist voters were loyal to their respective parties until the spring elections of 1933). Similarly the exact responsibility of "big capitalism" is still open to debate: the official representatives of industry did not declare for Hitler, and von Papen's links between Hitler and a banker or two were the result of individual initiatives. The greater part of the leadership both of the economy and the bureaucracy did not respect the Weimar Republic, considered the situation intolerable, and let the Hitler experiment go ahead for nationalist reasons, in the hope that conservatism would eventually take over from the "plebeian" movement necessary for the time being. At this level of the classic analysis—a blend of empirical sociology and Marxist analysis—the last word has not been said; the party archives have not yet been squeezed completely dry.

Will the remaining findings add to our knowledge? There were workers, and workers' sons, in the *SA*. What does it matter whether there were a few more or less? In the period of the battle against Weimar, Communists and Nazis more than once acted together, shoulder to shoulder. That some Communists slid towards the *SA* before or after the seizure of power there is no doubt. Again, what does it matter how many more or less?

IT MAY BE SAID THAT Hitler's coming to power ceases to be a mystery after all the historico-sociographic studies, but that the submission of the entire people and the passivity of the entire left remain unintelligible. Yet in Berlin, with no information, I never for a moment believed in a revolt of the Socialists or Communists. Why, and how, were the two "working-class parties" supposed to become overnight allies for an armed struggle? On 30 June 1934 Hitler secured the support of the *Reichswehr* by warding off the second Revolution, eliminating the *SA* leaders who wanted to form the nucleus of another army, and killing some conservative plotters together with some possible rivals (Gregor Strasser and General Schleicher). As

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Marshal Hindenburg's successor, fortified by the German officers' oath of allegiance to his person, Hitler gave work to the unemployed, let the businessmen make profits, and delighted nationalists (the mass of the people) with some unhoped-for successes (military service, the reoccupation of the Rhineland).

There again, the study of the particular responsibility of the various economic groups in decisions taken at the summit will do little to alter the findings already established. From 1933 until 1936 Dr Hjalmar Schacht ran the German economy hand-in-hand with the main employer organisations. When he proved hostile to the four-year plan and to rearmament, he was soon forced to leave the Cabinet. The Third Reich's economy never appeared as an *original* system conceived and imposed by a *doctrinal* will. Entrepreneurs went on running businesses with a view to production, productivity, and profit. The four-year plan was meaningless except in the context of war. Certainly a National Socialist workers' organisation was set up at the same time; and although it did not replace the trade unions it did limit the power of the union leadership to some extent. Some of the populistic (rather than socialistic) inspiration of the movement embodied itself in the nation's institutions, but administrative muddle worsened, new bodies multiplied without the old ones disappearing or the division of power being clearly defined. To define the Third Reich by its economic régime, whether this is called "capitalist" or not, would be ludicrous. Three years of Keynesianism by Schacht—three years of preparing for war—three years of war *without* total mobilisation. We can only speculate about the nature of a National Socialist economy after victory. Certainly exploitation of the conquered countries and of "inferior peoples" would have been a major element in the New Order.

ARGUMENT CONTINUES about the crisis of the German economy in 1938 or 1939. Is the war to be attributed to any cause other than the political will of Hitler or the nature of the National Socialist movement? I myself am not very interested in these kinds of discussion: Hitler never believed in economic constraints, and he met any objections from Schacht or from the experts with indifference or sarcasm. These discussions are fuelled by the mental obstinacy of the Marxists. Come what may, they are determined to unearth economic causes which determined key decisions, even after Hitler had taken total command.[3]

What people seek, they always find; proving the discovery is a different matter. Supposing that the *Reich* was short of foreign currency, the British would have been the first to provide facilities in return for a reprieve or armistice on the foreign policy front. Even for Marxists, or rather for Leninists, would it not be better to accept a formula compatible both with reality and with theory? The "contradictions of German capitalism" had compelled the ruling class to leave state power to an adventurer, a mass-manipulator. Partly freed from the infrastructure, an elected Caesarism plunged the country into war not so much in accordance with a preconcerted plan as through a series of steps taken in response to events.

THE NAZI MYSTERY, in other words, only survives as a function of the way the question is asked. If that question is subdivided into its component elements, the answers make the Hitler adventure quite as understandable as so many other episodes in history. Crisis, the paralysis of the parliamentary process, the pursuit of a deflationist policy, millions of unemployed, a Party organisation and its propaganda techniques, a quarrel between socialists and communists, the Nationalist reaction, the illusions of certain conservative circles, and so on. . . .[4]

In the climate of 1933 the electoral successes of the *NSDAP* did not seem mysterious, any more than the events of January 1933 seemed mysterious. I do not say that we had foreseen from the very first that once having gained the chancellorship, Hitler would eliminate his allies and manage to take absolute power; but in retrospect there is surely no cause for astonishment. I remember one conversation at the French Embassy in Berlin in February 1933, when a famous journalist recalled Mussolini's coming to power and sententiously declared that Mussolini would never have accepted shackles such as those which hampered Hitler's freedom of action. A few weeks later the shackles were off. Eighteen months later, Hindenburg's death enabled Hitler to unite in his own person the two functions of Chancellor and President, and to obtain the oath which had bound the officer corps to the Kaiser before 1918.

As for the conduct of the state between 1933 and 1945, where is the mystery there? Hitler, representing on this point the greater part of the ruling classes, wanted to restore the *Reich* to its rightful position in Europe and in the world. For the moment, the main item on the agenda was rearmament. What appeared "mysterious" to traditional German nationalists was that in three years Hitler succeeded in nullifying the two most important clauses of the Treaty of Versailles—with compulsory military service and the occupation of the

[3] Need I add that Karl Marx did no such thing when dealing with the wars of his own time?

[4] Each of these circumstances can be illuminated in its turn by a socio-economic analysis.

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Rhineland—without provoking any reaction from Britain and France.

Few historians have any doubt that Hitler had resolved to base the greatness of the Third Reich on force of arms and expansion of the national *Lebensraum*. His famous statements of 1937 to the military chiefs reveal the immoderation of Hitler's ambitions, although these were probably not laid down in detail; events did not quite proceed according to the suggested scenario. Tactics or even improvisation prevailed over strategy. The military chiefs judged that the *Reich* was still not ready for a full-scale war in 1938 or 1939. Once that war broke out, victory followed victory as far as the outskirts of Moscow. In the winter of 1941 the tide began to ebb, and it ran out, only four years later, in the bunker in Berlin where Hitler took his life.

## *A Variety of Fascism?*

IS IT POSSIBLE to reach a higher level of understanding by using particular concepts—that of *fascism* or of *totalitarianism*? I shall discount the vague political uses of the term fascism. Communists tie the fascist label to any more or less authoritarian régime hostile to Marxism, opposed to workers' parties, and in particular to the Communist party. Now and then they suggest that "creeping fascism" is infiltrating a liberal régime if some measures of dubious legality are taken. I personally would dub fascist a movement or régime which rejects plurality of parties, grants one party a monopoly of political activity, and glorifies the Nation and the State. Mussolini's Italian fascism corresponds with this definition, but not Spain's Francoism.

The varieties of fascism, a historical phenomenon of 20th-century Europe, sprang up after World War I. Its precedents or antecedents can be located in other eras, but I shall stick to our own. Italy gave a first example, National Socialism another. The ideologies promulgated by the varieties of Fascism all contain a mélange of counter-revolutionary and "populist" or "socialist" themes (in a generally vague sense of these words). As counter-revolutionaries, Fascists denounce liberalism and democracy; as populists, they pronounce themselves anti-plutocratic and promise national unity and class cooperation under the aegis of a state aspiring to be more or less total. All fascisms assert the principle of Authority and the notion of Hierarchy as necessary to the social order.

THE THINKING of *Action française*, and particularly of Charles Maurras, seems to me neither "fascist" nor "pre-fascist." It remained counter-revolutionary to the end, with the stress laid on restoring the monarchy. The combination of Monarchy, the Catholic Church (without Christian faith), the Parnasse, Hellenism and Mistral explains Maurras' success in Parisian or literary circles and his limited electoral appeal. Maurras influenced Salazar, who was never a fascist any more than Franco was. The fascist movement requires a popular participation which monarchy is unable to arouse in our time. Maurrasism was anti-Jacobin; it preached decentralisation and a return to the provinces, and ruled out a single-party system from the restored monarchy. If pressed, one might say that the critique of modern ideas came from *Action française*, and then spread throughout Europe. But that critique took on a special guise in each individual country. The fascist ideologues in Italy, who related themselves to Hegel, had nothing in common with Maurrasism; Mussolini learned more from Vilfredo Pareto or Georges Sorel than from Maurras. The German ideologues of the "Conservative Revolution" probably had read Maurras; yet they seem to me to be the German equivalents of the Maurrasians rather than their disciples.

Furthermore, of all the German ideologues of the 1920s and 1930s, the National Socialists held the minimum of genuinely traditional or conservative themes. Certainly they wanted to reconstitute a peasantry and remove farming from the fluctuations of the market economy. But the negative themes were the most effective, and these had to do with opposition to "plutocracy", which was characteristic of all the movements which claimed to be fighting against Marxism (the favourite themes were abuse of the Jews and of big industrial or business tycoons). As for the positive themes, these were based on a thoroughgoing racism, from which grew anti-Semitism and which led to a hierarchical account of society and a functionalist concept of order (everything in its proper place). Hitler's own plans, as expressed in his conversations with Rauschning and in the recorded *Table Talk*, were inspired first and foremost by racism and tailed off into lunacy.

The two counter-revolutionary régimes of Salazar and Franco stemmed from the failures of parliamentary democracies rather than from capitalist plots (even if the ruling circles of society were quite obviously in agreement with the Army chiefs). Salazarism was installed without any bloodshed.

In Spain, a botched *coup d'état* in 1936 unleashed a horrible civil war; little by little the régime departed from the strictly fascist model (single party, state ideology) and aligned itself with more Spanish traditions until the moment when the policy of economic growth in the 1960s paved the way for a democratisation after the death of Franco.

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Mussolini's régime never was totalitarian. The universities and intellectuals were not brought to heel, even if their freedom of speech was limited. Mussolini borrowed his anti-Semitism from Hitler's Germany, and did not suppress either the monarchy or the traditional institutions of his country. He was more like a Latin American *caudillo* than a *Führer*, and only became an actor in the European tragedy following his ventures in conquest (Ethiopia, and then "the Pact of Steel" with the Third Reich).

The common interpretation of fascist movements in Europe after World War II lists the same circumstances: confusion or impotence among the parliamentary democracies, the bitterness or resentment of social groups unwilling to ally themselves with the workers or to relapse into the proletariat, and nostalgia for the past among a considerable section of the ruling classes and even the intelligentsia. These phenomena assume colorations in keeping with the particular country, and favour different systems from one country to the next. Neither Mussolini nor Franco resisted economic development. Salazar's Christianity was adapted to the poverty of the country.

IF YOU PUT National Socialism into the same category as the régimes of the three Latin countries, do you add anything to the historical or sociographic description of the Hitlerite movement or régime? This then becomes one of the family of anti-rationalist reaction on the intellectual level and anti-democratic reaction on the political level—*another* of the intellectual movements which aspired to be at once traditional (or conservative) and revolutionary. In the early 19th century, counter-revolutionary thinking was still fuelled by Catholicism and still harboured more or less nebulous dreams of restoring the hierarchy of the *Ancien Régime*. In the cases of Salazar and Franco, the first was basically conservative and religious, and the second was also a restorer rather than an innovator. Judging by Hitler's own words, he was at heart essentially a revolutionary and a racist. But he did not win over the German masses with the inmost thoughts which (with the partial exception of anti-Semitism) he kept for himself and his inner circle. Nationalism, the promise of Work and of German Greatness, the denunciation of Big Business and the Jews—all this, combined with efficient propaganda and organisation, brought Hitler a massive slice of the electorate, but not a majority. The fact that the unconverted majority put up with the régime without the slightest attempt to resist by force does not constitute any kind of a mystery: police obey the powers that be, and the supplanted Weimar régime had never kindled any republican or democratic faith.

Referring to the concept of Fascism sheds little light, but simply reminds us of what we know already—namely, that the supposedly victorious régimes of 1919, believed to be in tune with *l'esprit du temps*, the spirit of the age, if not quite the *Zeitgeist*, did not withstand the test of experience and economic crisis in most of the countries of Europe.

## *Totalitarian Régime*

THE NOTION OF TOTALITARIANISM is in common use, although political scientists now hesitate to employ it. After the War, and especially in Hannah Arendt's famous book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), the terms applied to both Nazism (in its extremist phase, during the final years of the War) and Stalinist Sovietism. According to the classic definition, totalitarianism contains two elements: (*1*) the tendency of the state to swallow civil society whole; (*2*) the monopoly position of a single party and ideology, with the party becoming inseparable from the state and the state imposing the party's ideological truth upon society. The first characteristic is perfectly applicable to the Soviet régime, both before and after the NEP—but it never applied to the National Socialist régime. During the years of preparing for war, neither the party nor the state absorbed the civil society of Germany. The historical heritage was "brought into line"; the state bureaucracy and professional organisations were subjected to Nazi control; but that control had not yet remodelled society. The second characteristic, namely a partisan state and party monopoly, applies to both the Third Reich and the Soviet Union, although not without reservations. Nazism did not have the time and possibly not the capacity to equip itself with its own university and intellectual life.

Does the concept of totalitarianism deserve to be scrapped? Remember first that totalitarianism designates not so much a particular political system as the more or less clear-cut features of a number of systems. The characteristics singled out by Dr Carl Friedrich are: (*1*) an official millenarian ideology; (*2*) a single party with a mass base and élitist leadership, dominating or linked with the state bureaucracy; (*3*) monopoly of the media of communication; (*4*) terroristic police control; and (*5*) monopoly of weapons. The notion of a "partisan state" applies in our own day to a state which identifies itself with a given ideology, and hence suspends the dialogue between parties. The more fertile the ideology, the more partisan the state. The monopoly of the communication media is a logical consequence of the pretension to ideological monopoly. The monopoly of weapons belongs to the state in any case. It therefore remains to explain not the police monopoly—every

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state makes sure of that—but the terroristic character of that monopoly.

EVEN WITHIN the terms of these five characteristics, differences emerge between Hitlerism and Sovietism. In the Third Reich, relations between bureaucracy and party did not become stabilised and did not assume an institutional form. As for the Bolshevik Party, it quite obviously used the bureaucratic apparatus of Czarism, but after half-a-century the people in the administration are cast in the same mould and trained by the same methods as those in the Party—which does not rule out tension between the two organs of the Soviet state. The Bolsheviks were brought to power by other classes than was the *NSDAP*; their millenarianism draws on different sources; and 60 years later they have built a special kind of society. The comparison between Nazism, 6 years after taking power, and Bolshevism, 60 years after the Revolution, would be absurd; yet, having said all this, the concept of "totalitarianism" has not lost all its meaning.

AT THE OUTSET, it might have been taken as a reply to Marxism in so far as it focused on the form of the state at the risk of neglecting the infrastructure or considering the infrastructure as the expression of the state. All the same, the term "totalitarianism" still designates the extreme form liable to be taken by partisan states which elevate an ideology into an obligatory truth. In addition to certain analytical extravagances and even paradoxes, Hannah Arendt wrongly presented totalitarianism as a kind of essence, invulnerable to the erosion of time.

Hitler's terrorism did not give rise to anything comparable to the Moscow Trials of 1936–38 and the endless confessions of imaginary crimes. All of us were struck by the theatrical staging of the trials and the so-called confessions recited by the accused. Various open questions remain outstanding to this day, but the basic mechanism of those ceremonies is familiar. The accused—though not all of them—succumbed to torture, physical or moral, or to their judges' promises. (Since 1956, the accused have not been confessing but have pleaded innocent.) The Hitlerites never compelled the guilty to repudiate their crimes. Likewise, those whose culpability was race-created could not vindicate or exculpate themselves by conversion. During Nazism's most terroristic phase, in 1942/45, the police were looking for genuine opponents (as was demonstrated by the attempt on Hitler's life on 20 July 1944).

On the face of it, the two most extreme expressions of Stalinism and Nazism, respectively the Great Purge and the extermination of the Jews, have nothing in common. On the one hand we have the production-line murder of millions of defenceless human beings, on the other the imprisonment of millions of people, and the elimination of hundreds of thousands of Soviet citizens (some of them favourable, others hostile to the régime, some of them picked out from among the upper echelons and others from the peasants and workers). Perhaps the phrase "nothing in common" is an exaggeration. In both cases the authorities were acting by virtue of an ideology, an account of the historical world as a whole, which had in turn a metaphysical base.

The difficulty in explaining either of these monstrous episodes of our time has to do with a unique cause which might be called epistemological or philosophical: namely, to what extent can we develop an intelligible account of human conduct which we consider irrational?

Consider the last years of the Third Reich. The approach of defeat; total, but delayed and badly organised mobilisation; the rise of internal opposition and plotting; the ascendancy of the *SS*—all these created a kind of chaos. Terror seems to me to be understandable both in relation to the circumstances and to the men who had risen to the highest ranks, men like Himmler and Goebbels. As for the act of genocide, at the risk of sounding offensive I would say that its apparent irrationality results from a mistaken perspective. On several occasions, and in particular on the first day of hostilities, Hitler proclaimed that the Jews would not survive the War which in his view they themselves had triggered off. We did not take him at his word and were unwilling to believe him, but in fact *he meant it*. If we are prepared to admit that the liquidation of the Jews, the "Jewish poison", the "tainted blood", was Hitler's prime objective, then the industrial organisation of death becomes rational as the means to the predetermined end of genocide. Instrumental rationality is by nature amoral, or morally neutral. Given the end of genocide, it was necessary to divert from the armed forces the men, the materials, and above all the means of transport needed to achieve that end. Of course a victorious Hitler could have completed the job in his own good time. Once he was no longer certain of victory, he wanted to make sure that his eugenic mission was carried out, whatever the outcome of the War.

This leaves another question—can such a goal be called rational? To the extent that the notion of what is rational is not distinct from reason, and that this is contrasted with the passions, then the goal of genocide rules out reason. Only unbridled passion or unconscious anguish dictates such a decision. The question now shifts: To what extent can that decision be rendered understandable? By a Marxist analysis, it certainly cannot. That kind of analysis accounts for the looting in the pogroms which the

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Jews had suffered in the past. In face of the universal death sentence the analysis breaks down. What impersonal forces, what social functions can be invoked? I see only one conclusion—a disarming one—namely that the cause of the genocide was the obsessional hatred[5] of a small group of men who had gained power because of a national and social crisis. The detonator of an explosion is not necessarily of the same order of magnitude as the explosion itself.

And what explains the execution of that whole enterprise? There is only one answer: bureaucratic automatism. Members of the *Einsatzkommando* were repelled by these murders. The gas chambers did not require many staff. As for the rest—the half-awareness of the population, which looked the other way; the silence of the Papacy; Roosevelt's and Churchill's refusal to speak out—all this is well known. What has happened in the world since then does at least help us to understand. We know today that these attitudes are human, all too human.

AS REGARDS Soviet totalitarianism, I shall confine myself to a few brief comments (I hope to come back to this question in a further article). Ceremonies of self-incrimination and liquidation went out with Stalin. The Gulag Archipelago preceded the reign of Stalin, and it has outlived him. As such, it appears inseparable from the Communist Party and its resolve to build a "new society" into which each and every individual is entirely integrated. During the years of "Building Communism", the Party came up against unreconstructable disciples of the old régime, disappointed idealists, believers in transcendental religions, innumerable violators of "socialist legality." North Korea, China and Viet Nam have in turn spawned their own versions of the Soviet Gulag—but not the countries of Eastern Europe, even during the years of Stalinist terror.

The "Great Purge" put the question: Ought we to seek an instrumental rationality behind an operation which disrupted both the Government and the Army? How much blame should be laid on Stalin himself? Even today, we hover between several answers. The confessions of the accused as well as the purge raise another major question: What did the judges, the Party members, and the ordinary citizens believe in? What advantage was offered by the revelation of so many traitors or conspirators in the body of the state?

At the present moment the régime has been "normalised." The dissidents are recognised as such. Those unknown in the West are subjected either to the Gulag or to treatment in a psychiatric clinic. Those who are known in the West have a chance of being expelled or, perhaps, exchanged for Soviet spies. Sovietism lives on, but not Stalinism. After Solzhenitsyn, Zinoviev. Through the former it might be said that we have lived inside the Stalinist universe. Through the latter, we understand the Soviet universe 30 years after the death of Stalin. No longer the monstrosity that it was in the era of "Uncle Joe", it is just as terrifying because it may perhaps have created the *homo sovieticus* that ideology boasted of creating, the new man adapted to the total requirements of the régime.

HISTORIOGRAPHY has not depleted all its reserves. David Schoenbaum's *La Révolution brune*[6] throws light on the social transformations prompted by the Third Reich, which have contributed to the success of democracy in West Germany. Other historians continue and will continue to qualify and enhance the story or interpretation of the 13 years of ascendant Hitlerism by locating the Nazi ideology in a certain current of German or European thinking. What the title of this article suggests is that "the Nazi question" does not ask a riddle which still awaits its Oedipus. Progress in economic analysis, the accumulation of quantitative data and further discrimination between modernist changes and reactionary impulses will not supersede today's conclusions, which are that a crisis of world capitalism, particularly severe in Germany, paralysed the working of the parliamentary system, fostered the radicalisation of the masses, and brought to power a man who for some years embodied German destiny. Having achieved power with the semi-collusion of the ruling classes, he took up the national mission of restoring the *Reich* to the position taken from it at Versailles. He led his country to victory after victory, and after that to a *Götterdämmerung*.

One man, and so much death, so much ruin? Of course not. Any German nationalist régime would have tried in any case to get the historic verdict of 1918 reversed. The attempt might well have followed a different path. But from 1938 to 1945 the history of the Third Reich is defined neither by the crisis of monopoly-capitalism nor by the grievances of the *petit bourgeoisie* nor by German nationalism. It merges with the Hitler adventure. Was he Chaplin's hair-dresser or Evil incarnate? On that man, the last word has not been spoken, nor will it ever be spoken. Every great man in history bears with him to the grave his wretched freight of secrets.

MY EVALUATION OF contemporary approaches to Hitler and to the rise and fall of national

[5] Possibly a matter for psychiatry.

[6] *La Révolution brune, la société allemande dans le IIIe Reich* (Laffont), a translation of *Hitler's Social Revolution* (Doubleday, 1966).

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socialism was written before I had read Sebastian Haffner's study, *Bemerkungen zu Hitler*.[7] It provides me with a convenient opportunity for a few concluding remarks.

Unlike most reputable historians of today, Haffner does not seek to explain the driving force of the Third Reich in terms of class struggle, economic crisis, *petit bourgeois* unrest, the authoritarian personality, or fascism. He seeks and finds it in Hitler the man. And he speaks truly, as long as we can clarify the truth he brings to light. What happened to Germany, Europe, and the rest of the world defies understanding if we omit the personal equation of the *Führer* and his combination of genius and paranoia. The historian sees him as a "great man"—a "hero" (with no moral connotation, since he was also a criminal pure and simple)—because he forged the Europe and the world in which we live today. In addition to this first proposition—Hitler-was-a-great-man-because-he-changed-the-course-of-history—Haffner recalls the creator of the National Socialist party, the *Reichskanzler* between 1933 and 1938, and the War Lord of 1933–41; and this reminder will offend the people who lived through this period and who saw in him the incarnation of evil.

Haffner's portrait of Hitler the man combines three main aspects: as a private individual (the shallow-mindedness or mediocrity of a *petit bourgeois* and autodidact, with a culture acquired through random reading); as a politician (exceptional gifts as an orator and manipulator); as a statesman (in the final analysis a destroyer and a criminal). He went into politics when he was 30, in 1919; in little more than 10 years' time, by September 1930, he was the arbiter of German policy; in another 10 years, by 1940, the master of Europe.

Haffner explains this stunning success in terms of Hitler's abilities, favourable circumstances, and most of all the weakness of the opponents he defeated. The abilities were the hypnotic power of his public speaking over the masses, and his skill as the organiser of a mass party, both in maintaining his own absolute control and in keeping up its dynamism and forward momentum. But, Haffner adds, the Weimar Republic was doomed in any case, despite the apparent stability due to Dr Schacht's monetary policy and Gustav Stresemann's diplomacy between 1924 and 1928. It was rejected by the ruling class and by Ger-

[7] *The Meaning of Hitler* (Weidenfeld 1979).

## *Psychiatry & History*

IN THIS ESSAY *I have neglected the numerous studies in psychology or psychoanalysis, individual or collective. Not that I am indifferent or hostile to this kind of research. On the contrary. Saul Friedländer's essay on Nazi anti-Semitism seems to me exemplary both for its good sense and its methodological rigour. By very reason of its special nature, Hitler's racism partly falls within the province of psychoanalytic interpretation. When St Bernard preached the Second Crusade and gave rise to medieval pogroms, he did not thereby qualify as a neurotic. On the other hand Hitler, who did not so much fear Jewish domination (along the lines of the "Protocols of the Elders of Zion") as the pollution of Aryan blood by the "Jewish poison", does display symptoms of neurosis. He at least call for psychoanalytic investigation, and its findings will never be free of controversy.*

*Other kinds of research, such as those which deal with the "Authoritarian Personality", have produced a mass of literature. There is a general readiness to believe that there is a correlation between personality structure and political opinions. That this structure is influenced by the relation between parents and children, no one will deny. I do not reject "transversal explanations", those which seek to relate the events under study not to variables situated at the same level but to deep variables to be fathomed by methods foreign to classical historians. "Depth psychology" contributes one more argument to the standard thesis of the conversion of the lower middle class to Nazism, though at the risk of likening an attitude or a political opinion to a mental illness.*

*Emmanuel Todd, in his latest book "Le fou et le prolétaire" (Laffont, 1978), does not hesitate to take these kinds of method to their extreme conclusion. "From a psychiatric viewpoint, all political extremists come into the same category defined by a standard symptom, the need for violence and power." Since "the madness of states is only a reflection of the madness of elites", "the behaviour of the Soviet ruling class in its quest for military power might represent in the Europe of 1979 a vestige of the attitude prevailing among the European ruling classes of 1914." In this perspective, "ideology is merely a system proposed by society to its mentally sick." From statements like this it would be possible to deduce a therapy which we might apply to our own extremists, comparable to the one applied by the neurotics of the Politburo to their dissidents.*

*THE MIND BOGGLES at the project of measuring the mental health of an entire people or class by its rates of suicide, alcoholism, or motor accidents. To compare patriotic feeling to a form of neurosis presupposes, to say the least, a quite narrow concept of psychological normality. The young of today, benefiting from a non-repressive upbringing and released from traditional and sexual taboos, become the model of normality. The whole history of states and of warfare is converted into the work of the mentally deranged.*

*At this rate, the innovators will end by driving us back into the arms of Toynbee!*

*R.A.*

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many's conservatives. This left two candidates to replace it—a Conservative Restoration (or revolution), and National-Socialism—and the odds were on the side of National-Socialism because of its unique ability to mobilise the masses.

FRANCE, like the Weimar régime, was weak. After its gesture to maintain its precarious dominance in Europe by occupying the Ruhr (in 1923), France had to become resigned to the policy of concessions to Germany which was advocated by Great Britain. It evacuated the Rhineland five years before the date laid down, gave up its reparations claims, and conceded the principle of equal rights in the field of armaments. Hitler stepped up the pace by proclaiming compulsory military service in 1935 and by occupying the demilitarised zone in 1936. France bowed to the inevitable and to London's propensity for inactivity. Hitler's psychological intuition overmastered the apprehensions of his German civil and military advisers.

In the economic field he put his trust in Hjalmar Schacht, who eliminated unemployment in three years and put six million unemployed back in work. Rearmament made a contribution to full employment, but it was not the major cause (here again, Haffner is right). Schacht unwittingly took up a Keynesian concept, in the form of an economy separated from the outside world by a régime of differential exchange rates. This "Keynesianism" was consolidated by authoritarian wage-and-price-control. Hitler gave full rein to Schacht, whose management was in accordance with his own personal preferences.

He must also be credited with having the nerve to bank on his armoured divisions and to support unconventional generals against the traditionalist majority. It was Hitler who imposed the new Manstein plan (the thrust through the Ardennes) instead of the old Schlieffen strategy. He had genuine military ability. Until autumn 1941 Hitler appeared to be a great war leader, although since then the generals and historians have blamed him for three possibly fatal mistakes: stopping von Rundstedt's tanks for 48 hours outside Dunkirk, and thereby reprieving the British Army; refusing to attempt the direct invasion of Great Britain; and delaying the decisive attack on Moscow.

I SHALL DISREGARD the various controversies which are not, I feel relevant to Haffner's study. He makes the very most of the contrast between the various phases—first the "achievements and victories", then the defeats, crimes, and eventual "betrayal." In 1938, after absorbing Austria and the Sudetenland in the greater *Reich*, Hitler had rallied to his cause those Germans—half the electorate—who had earlier refused him their votes in free elections. If he had died early in 1939, would he not now be seen as one of the greatest men in German history (without quotation marks)? Haffner replies to this question of Joachim Fest's with two pertinent remarks of his own. Hitler had not created any régime or constitution in the place of those he had destroyed. If he left the scene he would leave a void; if he stayed, his victories would serve as a springboard for further adventures. He did not want "hegemony" in Europe—the French and English had already granted him that—what he wanted was a war to create a world empire.

But this ambition was coupled with another aim: the "elimination of the Jews", which he valued just as highly as world empire. He felt that he alone was capable of waging such a great war for such historic objectives. Hence his own remark: "better for war to come when I am only 50 years old, at the height of my powers. . . ." Hitler's alleged psychology then gives rise to the following themes: *misjudgment, mistakes, crimes,* and *betrayal.*

MISJUDGMENT: Hitler was not purely a power-hungry opportunist. He believed in his own vision of the world, which combined a commonplace theory—that history amounts to the struggle between nations (or races) for *Lebensraum*—with a false idea, the Jew as universal enemy. He did his utmost, come what might, to reconcile the two themes of the struggle *between* nations and the struggle of *all* nations *against* the Jews. His anti-Semitic obsession cost him dear even in his ascendant phase: it led him towards the crime of "the Final Solution", *die Endlösung.*

MISTAKES: In 1940, after his military successes, he could have offered France a generous peace and created a "new order", simultaneously discouraging England from pursuing a fight which would be both hopeless and meaningless, and establishing a Europe that had come to terms with German hegemony. Hitler never gave it a thought. Crushing France was part of his programme; it was to put the German nation on the path to further conquests in a different direction. According to his original programme, on the other hand, England was meant to adopt a position of benevolent neutrality towards the campaign in the East. Haffner does not refrain from "rationalising" the attack of June 1941 in the framework of his master strategy (on this point I follow him only with certain reservations). He finds himself unable to devise any reasonable motive whatsoever for the declaration of war on the United States after Pearl Harbor. In the absence of that quite incomprehensible action, how could Roosevelt possibly have responded to aggression by Japan with a declaration of war against Ger-

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many? How could he have given priority to the Western theatre when the American people were up in arms against Japan (guilty of having launched its surprise attack on the American fleet some hours before delivering the diplomatic text in Washington)?

CRIMES: Hitler's written order, dated 1 September 1939, to kill the sick and eliminate one hundred thousand "useless mouths" in the course of the next two years; the elimination of the gypsies (the number of victims is estimated as half-a-million); the planned extermination of the most highly educated classes in Poland; the inhuman treatment of Russian prisoners and mass murder of leading Russian civilians; and lastly "the Final Solution", the production-line extermination of millions of Jews. Haffner adopts an interpretation previously formulated, namely that Hitler was determined to achieve at least one of his two war aims, and that he decided on "the Final Solution" following the setback before Moscow which made him cease to believe in eventual victory.

BETRAYAL: Hitler was propelled into politics by the shock of November 1918. He had sworn himself a vow that "November 1918 would never happen again." In fact this date of shame is equated with Ludendorff's decision to protect the German Army from inevitable defeat and to throw the blame for the disaster on to the post-war liquidators. Ceasing hostilities when the military outcome is no longer in doubt means cutting everyone's losses and keeping some options for the future. But the battered, desperate Hitler wanted to take the German people with him when he died. Whereas every German wanted to be occupied by the Western allies rather than the Bolsheviks, it was the West that bore the brunt of the Ardennes offensive launched in the winter of 1944-45—an offensive which also reduced the forces available on the Eastern front. He even ordered the civil and military authorities to "destroy everything" which might be of use to the invaders. In other words he longed to annihilate Germany itself—the Nation was no longer worthy to live, because it had lacked the strength to conquer.

TWO MAIN OBJECTIONS have been raised against this study [8] (which I much admire): and they will be even louder in France. Some chapters present a portrait of "a great man" with or without the quotation marks, and there are plenty of readers who want to see him solely as the monster which he undoubtedly was too. Does the author go rather too far by shifting the responsibility of the people of Germany on to the shoulders of one man alone? Haffner does occasionally give this impression; but it is not his real line of thought, as I read it. He does not argue about "the responsibility of the German people", which is another theme again. He does think that Hitler never was the expression and great exemplar of the German people. Of course Hitler embraced some of the old ideas, myths, and dreams of Germany. He did not obviously invent or create anti-Semitism. But this Austrian without an occupation, without the company of family, friends or children, stood outside the ordinary realm of humanity. To make this faithless, lawless man the *Führer* of the *Reich* it took the dissolution of the Wilhelmine Empire, the weakness of a Republic without republicans, millions of unemployed, and a nation in rebellion against defeat and the treaty of Versailles.

Historians have studied—and always will continue to study—what happened in Germany before 1933, and between 1933 and 1945, both around Hitler and beneath him. Hitler was the mainspring of policy and strategy, and he was the man responsible for vast and horrendous crimes. Historians can only make intelligible the possibility of a Hitler. But it is through understanding Hitler himself that we can come to understand, say, the wild declaration of war on the United States, and the unspeakable "Final Solution." We must still pursue the human monster to the threshold of his own abyss.

[8] See in ENCOUNTER Golo Mann's critique, "The Vulture's Sense of Death" (February 1979).

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*James Sutherland-Smith*

# Mr Pooter's Meetings with a Well-Known Poet

The first time we met I was a student.
He had given my college's prize
To a poet who later hanged himself.

"Life vindicating Art" or "Art
Vindicating Life" (I can't remember
Which way round) he'd say between gulps of wine

When I reminded him of our first meeting.
I was so impressed by the mere fact
Of having met him I didn't say much.

So I wasn't surprised the second time
When I introduced myself and said
"We met when you gave my college's prize

To a poet who later hanged himself.
But you won't recall me" when he didn't.
It was on this occasion he made

Many of the remarks I came to know
By heart since he made them on the third,
Fourth and fifth occasions we met.

Strange to relate, each time he failed
To recognise me. The sixth time
He was one of three poets judging me

For a literary prize. A colleague
Questioned me on why I wrote so much
As though I had something unpleasant

Such as a rare bowel disorder.
My poet seemed to have dined and drunk well.
The seventh time I had won the prize.

I walked up and was about to say,
"Possibly you will remember
The first time we met. You gave a prize

To a poet who later hanged himself",
When he stared at me and said "Who are you?"
Then he turned away with his companion

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Remarking "We were talking about football."
I think I must have jogged his memory.
The eighth time hasn't happened yet.

My fantasy is very simple.
I will be giving a reading with him
And I will recite this poem.

After he will say "Didn't we first meet
When I gave your college's prize
To a poet who later hanged himself?"

## *Hubert Moore*

# The High

There is a receipt from the garage;
a request to give blood next week
at the Victoria Hall; and—from Oxford—
three ways I might pay to restore
a dilapidated bit of my old college.

I can just see it: at the top right
of a 19th-century drawing of High Street,
looking west from where I stand. Between
Univ and Queen's, a dog sits scratching;
two dons, caught short crossing the street,

hang in mid-argument. Nothing seems
to be coming. Up at All Souls, though,
where High Street veering inwards touches
High Street, the most important tree
in the world looks east, looks west, leans

out over the street from a garden,
unstiffening its fingers. I can't see
any colour yet, though the first tight
buds—mere fingerpricks—bubble up,
then knuckles whiten, and the bleeding

starts. Huge red buses emerge (Cowley,
Hinksey, Headington—nowhere's exempt);
blood-banks fill, unfill; an ambulance
goes frantic, searching high and low. I'll
pay—by banker's order, annually.

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# NOTES & TOPICS

# European Diary

## The Comeback of Drieu La Rochelle

*Paris*

IT REMAINS a kind of odd distinction: Drieu La Rochelle was the most talented of the French writers who collaborated with the Germans during the Nazi Occupation of World War II. (That is, if we except the case of Louis-Ferdinand Céline, which was a quite different matter.) It was he who in those years continued publishing the famous Paris journal, *La Nouvelle Revue Française*. But the years and the decades go by, and in recent days the whole affair of "literary collaboration" has been reviewed and reconsidered, and Drieu La Rochelle has indeed become something of a "cult object." So many elements lend themselves easily to a dramatic renewal of interest: his suicide after the German defeat (in order to escape a punishment which he probably need not have feared), his posthumous works which include a "Secret Report" (his confession of moral bankruptcy) as well as the manuscript of a novel, *Dirk Raspe* (presumably about Van Gogh).

In the generation of the earlier World War, Drieu was with Henri de Montherlant and Louis Aragon among the literary leaders of the so-called front veterans (Céline arrived much later). Among Drieu's friends was the young André Malraux, with whom he remained close even after political differences separated him from his other comrades on the Left; indeed he was the godfather of one of Malraux' sons (of the relation with Josette Clotis Malraux), and in his last days, when all was lost, he even thought of joining Malraux' Brigade, in fact named him executor in his testament (which Malraux conscientiously fulfilled).

A biography was recently published by Dominique Desanti, who used to be something of a Communist philosopher and became well-known through an earlier book of memoirs about her Stalinist years. She thought of it as a study of "a seducer betrayed." Now a second book about Drieu has been issued by Hachette [1] and is receiving widespread notice: one of the authors (Pierre Andreu) belonged to the semi-fascist party of the ex-Communist Jacques Doriot and has a certain engagement; the co-author (Frédéric Grover) is one of those indefatigable American researchers who, like Herbert Lottmann in his *Camus* biography and Philip Kolb's *Proust Correspondence*, take endless pains with factual documentation. All taken together, including a film of one of Drieu's works made in the '60s, has pushed the whole case into the centre of attention.

DRIEU was born in Paris (in 1893), but his parents had come from Brittany and Normandy; as a young literary aspirant he travelled frequently across the Channel and English indeed became his second language. (He later turned out to be the confidant of Herr Otto Abetz, Hitler's man in Paris, but he hardly knew a word of German.) Each of the biographical details has a curiously ironic twist. He studied political science, but failed his examination. He first married a Jewish doctor, Colette Jeramec, and later a Polish beauty named Alexandra Sienkiewiscz, who was supposed to be "the ideal wife"; but among his various liaisons, escapades and adventures (often with prostitutes), there was his long passionate affair with "Beloukia", the wife of the French automobile-king, Louis Renault.

His experiences at Verdun and in the Dardanelles led to his first stories, and his collection *The Comedy of Charleroi* is still very readable. Politically he was for some form of "united Europe", flirted on the left with Communist tendencies, but moved Rightwards towards sympathies for Fascism, out of a bitterness over French weakness and indecisiveness and his supra-national hopes. To be sure he would have much preferred a French rather than a German, a Nazi, Europe; but rather the latter than none at all. Drieu was not the only French intellectual who did not simply "go along with the victors" but lost his way in a desperate search for "larger forces."

There is an analysis of Drieu's quest in Paul Nizan's book about "Fascist Socialism" (Nizan had been a Communist, who broke after the Hitler-Stalin pact and was killed in World War II). "There are qualities here", Nizan wrote, "which cause one to regret the loss of such a man. And yet he was not alone in being the victim of a struggle which led to cooperation with hangmen. . . ." At the time Drieu was a guest at the Nuremberg Party Rally (after which, typically, he went on to Moscow).

[1] *Drieu La Rochelle*. By PIERRE ANDREU and FRÉDÉRIC GROVER. Hachette-Littérature.



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His latest biographers pay rather more attention to his sexual drives than the interested reader is likely to sustain (how impotent he was, why he was so attractive to women, what kind of love ruled his life), especially when so little is clarified. Unclarified, too, are the complex sources of his turbulent anti-Semitism, even though we now also have a reprint available of the magazine *The Last Days*,[2] which he edited with Emanuel Berl, a Jewish friend. It was a strange obsession, and evidently it was taken seriously by almost nobody. He could write mean and nasty pamphlets, and yet provoke surprisingly little personal hatred. Neither Colette Jeramec nor his many Jewish friends appear to have held it against him. No doubt about it, there was a certain magical charm to his personality, to his youthfulness, his adolescent immaturity, his disarming impulsiveness.

For a generation which considered itself "lost" or "desperate" he succeeded in capturing the mood both in his novels and in his personal life. There was also abroad in the land a love for the provocative (and it took Aragon from surrealism to Stalinism). In Drieu it exemplified itself in a weariness with life, a disgust with ideas, which could not lead to convictions and passions. There was no end to his naïve disappointments. When he was editing the *Nouvelle Revue Française* he was turned down by both André Gide and François Mauriac. Why should he ever have thought of asking them? His predecessor, Jean Paulhan, fought in the *Résistance*; and Drieu wrote badly of him. The inexplicable complexities mount: Drieu saved Paulhan from arrest and worse; and was duly thanked in a letter. He also went out of his way to help Malraux and Berl and others during this period of the Occupation and the Underground. All *collaborateurs* had their reasons and excuses, but very few actually used their position to "prevent the worst." In the end he put a simple end to the intricacies of his emotional turmoils: the self-destructiveness, adumbrated in so many of his writings, culminated in his suicide in 1945.

THE LIFE AND DEATH has, obviously, its dramatic interest; the books, I think, even more so. Beyond the conventional efforts of sympathetic biographers and critics, the paradox and irony of Drieu La Rochelle challenges. I suspect that the new fascination with Fascism and even Hitlerism is not an altogether "negative" attraction, as the recent grotesque Paris cults of figures like Leni Riefenstahl and Arno Breker would suggest. Can it be a genuine nostalgia for such dark journeys "to the end of the night"?

[2] *Les Derniers Jours*. By DRIEU LA ROCHELLE and EMANUEL BERL. Editions Jean-Michel Place.


# HITLER'S FIRST FOREIGN MINISTER

**Constantin Freiherr von Neurath**

*John L. Heineman*

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In his own work—see his writings of 1927–28, The Young European (*La Jeune Europe*) and Geneva or Moscow (*Genève ou Moscou*)—he liked to present his own views as symptoms and signals, rather than as directions; and he declined to fulfil the normal expectations of the French intellectual reader for lessons, morals, rules, myths. He had lost his sense for the nation; all the nations were exhausted, useless; the provinces might still barely survive, in which case a greater Europe might well emerge. "There are too many fatherlands, and they no longer exist. . . ."

He found something "clownish" in the attempts of the local or the provincial to assert itself; and perhaps the nostalgic impulse of readers today is driven by the present confusions between exhausted old forces and pregnant European ideas powerless to be born. He had no fears for the "idea of France" from the Second or the Third International; for him the real dangers of a spiritual disorientation lay in the vapid village historians and their distracting local colour. In the last analysis, readers may be turning again to Drieu as a prophet of disorientation. In another amoral era of foul compromises an enigmatic spectacle of desperation takes on a certain pertinence.

*François Bondy*

## *Letter from Germany*

# The West Adrift

*Bonn*

IN THE SPRING, alas, given the troubles which began with the new year, a European's mind turns to thoughts of decline and fall. It is easy to see why, but still it is not so easy to pin-point the precise point of the prevalent pessimism. In spite of the pressures of the OPEC Oil Cartel, the West European economies are getting along, in any case better than in some other parts of the world. The general mass prosperity appears to be nowhere seriously endangered. The political institutions function as they are constitutionally supposed to; there is everywhere a kind of *Stabilität*, even if it is not always the loaded catchword which dominates our German politics. Everything seems to be what it used to be—and yet everything is different.

There was a certain firm political texture to what we first called the West in the late 1940s and '50s, and this no longer exists. To be sure, there is still the NATO alliance, wearily trying to strain itself into a new rearmament effort; and also the various organs of the interconnected Western economies which are supposed to coordinate and control but which now seem to lack all coherent purposefulness—namely, the old conviction that there was a basic community of interests (indeed, of destinies!) which determined common policies and a shared sense of the future. As the Soviet occupation of Afghanistan and the hopeless inability to work out an effective Western response has shown, the foundations of Atlantic or Euro-American policy have been crumbling.

THE AMERICANS accuse their allies who remain silent and, at least publicly, without reply, because they do not want to admit or confess what they actually think of the USA's current state as a world-political leader of what used to be known as "the free world." In France and in Japan there never was a strong feeling to follow and go along, and in Britain only on the basis of some privileged "special relationship." In the *Bundesrepublik* of West Germany the ruling post-War political generation was indeed *bereitwillig*, full of a cooperative eagerness, so long as the connections were characterised by qualities of confidence which guaranteed security and authority. The caution and even the timidities of several decades were considered understandable—doing nothing in 1953, when Stalin died and there was "panic and disarray", not least in East Germany; doing nothing in 1956, when Suez diverted attention from the Hungarian revolt and the Polish troubles; doing nothing when the East Berlin Wall was built in '61 or when the Czechs burst forth in their "Prague Spring" in '68—after all, these were "internal crises" of the Soviet bloc and any kind of "Western intervention" was uncalled-for.

Nevertheless certain doubts began to plague a few European spirits. They began to be concerned—and the worry has sadly fulfilled itself—that every time a crisis broke out over some Soviet Russian aggressive move the West would only respond with an offer to relax, to disarm, and yet again to resume friendly peaceful relations.

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When the cause of South Viet Nam was abandoned, it was of course taken to be (especially on the Left) some kind of "return to international morality", but no one experienced any real sense of renewed confidence in the qualities of American leadership. Troubled Spain and Portugal were left to the Europeans; Angola and Mozambique were left to the Marxists; a second Cuba crisis raised an alarm which quickly subsided in the face of Soviet adamance; the fate of the Shah, that "best ally and friend" of decades, did not exactly build up faith in American reliability. In the wake of a defunct "Imperial Presidency" came a new style of imperial abandonment.

More than that, what was thought to be a kind of Washington "moral rearmament" after Watergate was also associated with a political-military disarmament, the dismantling of the secret intelligence services, a lackadaisical attitude toward power politics now deemed to be either distasteful or wrong. The pieties of President Jimmy Carter won neither admiration nor confidence among the European leaders, none of whom was willing to speak out frankly. Nobody dares to tell the truth: that no Western government is prepared to make the security and the survival of their societies dependent on this kind of presidential leadership. The very notion of four more years in an alliance with the present incumbent and his present team raises goose-pimples in the ministries of Western Europe. Needless to say, there is also no one who could be called hopeful over the prospect of either a discredited Kennedy or a Republican import from Wild West films.

BUT EUROPE has its own miseries. For the moment it is moaning over the incapacity of a people of 200 million to produce an American leadership of undisputed quality; over the withdrawal from important if peripheral areas of world-power influence (as Solzhenitsyn told the Americans last year, "soon you will be running out of countries to give away . . ."); over the ineffectiveness of Carter's policy of sanctions against the Afghanistan invasion (its only merit so far has been a vaguely "moral" one). Yet all the moaning and groaning cannot disguise the harsh reality of our own European lack of perspectives and policy, our own deficiencies in political will. Or would the European cabinets have approved if the Americans had reacted to Afghanistan with a Caribbean move against Cuba? Whatever is proposed is taken to be an excited American "over-reaction"; but who, as Ambassador Hartman asked the allies in Paris, has yet come up with a list of more appropriate, cooler, better responses?

The Europeans have long since persuaded themselves to accept the idea that *détente* is "divisible", and go ahead with their two-headed strategy of "NATO plus relaxation", or the other way round. (In some powerful German circles I have the suspicion that the strategy, privately, amounts to "Eastern trade plus a ranch in Arizona.") I am afraid that Western Europe is uneasily, anxiously, approaching a kind of pseudo-neutrality between the super-powers. The word which is usually employed in such circumstances—"Finlandisation"—is, I think, misleading. What would more accurately characterise the underground tendencies of European policy is "Swedenisation." Who can say that because the policy is faint-hearted it is not understandable or without a future?

THE WEST is being run by a kind of political gerontocracy, despite the fact that the people at the top appear to be relatively young and physically stable. Yet they dare to entertain no new idea and often seem to be constitutionally quite incapable of it—no new ideas about the stability of their problem-laden societies, or of the future development of the international order. Holding on is all; risking nothing, or very little (if absolutely necessary); keeping things as they are, which becomes more and more difficult with only caution on hand. The West has lost its old purpose, and has not yet found a new role. In my view, since the idea of resisting Communism (even forcing it, here and there, into retreat) was abandoned—and since the *détente* policy of "relaxation" or *Entspannung* has revealed itself as a system of international quietude which only serves, more or less peacefully, the global interests of the Soviet Union—the West has been adrift. One can always turn to talking about peace when one no longer has will or hope.

*Johannes Gross*

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# All the Facts

## *Auden & Day-Lewis*—By CLIVE JAMES

THE REVIEWS OF two recent biographies—Charles Osborne's *W. H. Auden*[1] and Sean Day-Lewis's life of his father, *C. Day-Lewis*[2]—have been nearly as interesting as the books themselves. MacSpaunday remains a bone of contention for the British literary intelligentsia, perhaps because his collective reputation is mixed up with memories of the 'thirties, a period which throws a long shadow, to the extent that nobody is certain whether all the spies have yet been flushed. The amount of embarrassed soul-searching which is evidently involved makes me very aware that I am from another country. But it sometimes happens that the foreigner's view gains clarity from detachment. What matters most about MacSpaunday is that two of his components wrote enduring poetry. Whether Auden will be thought of as the genius and MacNeice as merely the master craftsman is a question not likely to be answered just yet. My own guess is that MacNeice will eventually be regarded as Auden's equal, if not in stature then at least in individuality. The only reason he was ever ranked lower was that he never influenced anybody, since he worked tricks that only a first-rate verbal talent could even try to copy. Anybody could try to copy Auden.

That was why all the young writers were ready to agree that Auden spoke for his generation. They thought they could talk that way too. Even at its least artful, the poetry of a man like MacNeice reminds the dabbler that he has no gift; even at its most artful, the poetry of a man like Auden makes any reader feel like a writer. The changes that make common phrases memorable seem so small, so easy. He was recognised immediately as a magician, but always those who did the recognising thought of him as *their* magician. Why, this man says our thoughts aloud! Hence the possessiveness. And they are possessive about him still. In nearly all the reviews of Charles Osborne's book the chief concern has been that Auden, their Auden, should not be traduced.

Well, he hasn't been. Osborne's book is light-toned and often distinctly unscholarly, but it has caught the man. That it did not also concern itself with catching the great poet was perhaps a tactical error. Tom Paulin, in the *New Statesman*, caned the book for leaving out Auden's high seriousness as an artist. He did not consider the possibility that Osborne was showing good manners in taking that for granted. There is also a possibility that Osborne simply did not recognise high seriousness in Auden, but this seems unlikely, since he has been so good at recognising it in Verdi. Books with the appropriate gravity will come in time—probably too gravid and certainly too many of them. This one has the gossipy actuality of a lived life. As with Isherwood's *Christopher and His Kind*, there is not much that it shirks. Auden comes out of it as a sad man in old age, and not very appealing in his prime—if what you want from genius is good behaviour and easy manners. According to this account his homosexuality hurt nobody, not even himself, but he had an overbearing manner and a full catalogue of disgusting personal habits to go with it, most of them focused on the unassuageable need to cram things into his mouth. He blamed untimely weaning—a tip to his biographer, who sensibly starts at the beginning.

Auden's childhood was apparently very happy, like Benjamin Britten's. For both of them there seems to have been enough love and encouragement to suggest that the middle class is a useful one for talent to be born into. A homosexual mentor called Michael Davidson helped to guide Auden's precocious mental development, but there was no suggestion at that stage of rebellion against his upbringing. Unusually among bright lads, Auden honoured his parents from the start. He always held that a child deserved as much neurosis as it could stand, but it is hard to see where his own share might have come from if he had not been homosexual. Even then his originality was mainly the concomitant of talent. Most of his eccentricities sprang from dedication. His version of Oxford aestheticism mainly confined itself to a strange

[1] *W. H. Auden: The Life of a Poet.* By CHARLES OSBORNE. Eyre Methuen, £7.95.

[2] *C. Day-Lewis: An English Literary Life.* By SEAN DAY-LEWIS. Weidenfeld & Nicolson, £12·50.



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choice of clothes. Probably he just bought the first clothes he saw in the window and put on the first he found in the morning. There was no lobster-walking: the poses he struck were all intellectual. What wowed his contemporaries was the way he said things, especially when he wrote them down. They found him overwhelmingly original and obviously they were right. His decisions were different from theirs. He was being driven by the complicated instinct of a great gift. When he got interested in Emily Dickinson and Wilfred Owen, or decided to ape Eliot's eclectic references by sowing his own work with scientific phraseology, he was not making arbitrary choices but following an impulse. His friends, not following an impulse but making arbitrary choices, were bound to be bowled over. Osborne paraphrases their worship, which few of them have ever made any secret of. Stephen Spender is disarmingly frank about his adoration in *World Within World* and Day-Lewis went on record with his immortal "Wystan, lone flyer, birdman, my bully boy!", which is an easy line to laugh at but should remind us that hero worship can look quite logical when there is a real hero about. Day-Lewis wasn't alone in the sentiment—he merely had the misfortune to put it in the most durably excruciating form.

WYSTAN WAS A *Wunderkind*. The question turns on how long he remained a *Kind*. It is usually true that the bigger the talent, the slower it ripens into wisdom. Auden's was a prodigiously creative mind at play. Among the things it played with was politics. Nowadays there are serious people who find it hard to forgive the 'thirties intellectuals for their infatuation with Communism, but if the serious people were as serious as they think they are they would do a better job of imagining the past. Osborne has been punished in some of the reviews for missing the nuances of the English class system. As his fellow Australian I suppose I could be convicting myself of an equal obtuseness by saying that I can't see he has missed much. He has brought out the cosy, resolutely chauvinistic insularity in which the young middle-class English poets could rebel against their comfortable upbringing by condemning what they conceived to be a capitalist society. He has also assumed, surely correctly, that the young people of the time had good reasons for supposing that the capitalist system would not be able to sustain itself, and no inkling as yet that democracy—or capitalism, for that matter—was not really susceptible of being analysed on materialist lines. Backing Communism looked like the only way to fight Fascism.

Nowadays it is easy to think like George Orwell. At the time you had to be George Orwell to manage it. A more damaging criticism of Auden is not that he was a dedicated revolutionary but that he was only playing at it.

By Osborne's account, Spain turned Auden away from radicalism rather than towards, while China, which he visited in the company of Isherwood, finished him with politics altogether. "Thin gardeners watched them pass and priced their shoes." "All Dung" and "Y Hsiao Wu" had a wonderful time in the Shanghai massage parlours but All Dung's net conclusion seems to have been that the world-scale political struggles already well under way had little to do with him: his shoes were too expensive. In other words he realised that he had been a bourgeois liberal all along. To the cold eye this might look like an even deeper descent into frivolity but Osborne prefers to believe that Auden was simply facing facts. The flight to America was away from politics and towards art, the thing he was good at.

Up to this point, it seems to me, Osborne's view is not only sympathetic, it has the additional merit of being right. Auden's callow demand for the death of the old gang was silly if sincere, and cynical if a pose, but the important point is that he was out of all that soon enough. He can hardly be much blamed for toying with, as a young man, what artists like O'Casey, Brecht, Aragon, MacDiarmid and Neruda went on supporing into old age. That he still seems blameworthy is because he spoke for England. MacNeice did a more thoroughly vituperative job of castigating a privileged society than Auden ever did but MacNeice spoke for himself—he lacked Auden's fatal resonance in the collective consciousness. Auden's ideal of a new order had more to do with homosexuality than with state ownership of the means of production. It *had* to be vaguely put. His mistake was to believe that his soul was his own. His emigration to America was widely regarded as treason then and in some quarters still is now.

BENJAMIN BRITTEN went to America too. For a while he and Auden worked in the same house: 7 Middagh Street, Brooklyn Heights. The place was a hot-bed of genius. Osborne seductively evokes the creative hubbub, with talented people scratching away behind every door. One of them was Gypsy Rose Lee. (Considering the proclivities of most of the male residents, one can only conclude that she had come to the wrong house, but perhaps she needed a rest.) Auden was an able housekeeper, thereby proving that his otherwise slovenly habits were largely a matter of choice: he begrudged wasting his powers of organisation on everyday affairs. Britten, on the other hand, couldn't abide mess. But the chief difference between them was that Britten's embattled country drew him home, eventually to the Order of Merit, a knighthood, and the universal

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esteem of his grateful compatriots. He didn't come home to fight, but he did come home. Auden, who knew he couldn't fight either, thought he might as well stay where he was.

He was never quite forgiven for it. P. N. Furbank, reviewing this book in *Quarto*, argues with some force that he never forgave himself either, and lived unhappily ever after. Most of the evidence, however, suggests that Auden was pretty good at not noticing his own blunders. Indeed the most repulsive item of behaviour which Osborne has to recount concerns what sounds like monumental insensitivity in just this matter. Donning American uniform in the last months of the war as part of the Strategic Bombing Survey, Auden made a lightning tour of Germany and stopped off in England to tell his erstwhile countrymen that compared with what had happened to continental Europe they had never suffered at all. He said this while helping himself to generous portions of their rationed food. Arrogance is often a cover-up for guilt but it is still arrogance. A decent silence would have been not just better manners but less blasphemous. Osborne has credit coming to him for not trying to soften this nasty episode. It is recorded that upon being told by an angry friend to hold his tongue, Auden looked contrite. Probably he had fallen into the trap which lies in wait for anyone deficient in self-esteem—the belief that one's opinions do not matter. And if one is in possession, as many artists are, of an *ad hoc* personality, it is often hard to remember that ordinary people pride themselves less on their work than on the consistency of their conduct, judging others by the same criterion. By the time the play-actor finds himself held in contempt, it is usually too late to remind his audience that he was only talking for effect.

AUDEN SEEMS TO HAVE GOT CRANKIER as he grew older. Perhaps the personality was transferring itself from the work to the man. Osborne has plenty of stories to tell, including the startling information—it was certainly a new one on me—that Auden had a heterosexual affair with a comely American lady called Rhoda Jaffe. But it took Chester Kallman to bring him what measure of domestic bliss he ever found. The friendship conferred all the blessings of stability. Apart from the aesthetic aspects—Kallman might have started off playing a credible Tadzio to Auden's Aschenbach but he did not age gracefully—the only thing you could say against their relationship was that it was a permanent terminus. Homosexual marriages are between lovers, and as Marina Tsvetayava put it in her touching little handbook for lesbians, *Mon frère féminin*, lovers are children and children don't have children. Nevertheless Auden seems to have obtained from the long alliance an enviable amount

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of peace and quiet. Those who believe that Auden's work went flat after the War should at least consider that the reason might not necessarily have been that he was cut off from his roots in England. Perhaps he had found contentment—traditionally a great enemy of lyric poetry.

My own view is that Auden got sick of his own winning streak. He took a moral stand against his early work, which he now conceived of as having created excitement through playing fast and loose with the truth. His later work eschews suggestiveness, some might say at the price of losing all poetic interest. There is good reason, I think, for saying that anyone who can't appreciate what Auden is up to in his later work probably can't appreciate his earlier work either, but there is no denying that Homer occasionally nodded. Osborne is commendably strict with the looser work, and rightly dismisses *Academic Graffiti*, which is an exercise in that least forgivable of all literary genres, the unfunny joke. He also shows, arrestingly, that Auden didn't have a clue about how to translate *Die Zauberflöte* so that a singer could sing it. I would have liked to hear more on this point, since Osborne, with his operatic connections, is well equipped to punch a large hole though Auden/Kallman's loudly flaunted expertise as librettist.

THE END CAME at Christ Church College, Oxford, and was very messy. Osborne tactfully scamps the full story of what happened between Auden and the young man he reported for the alleged theft of his wallet, but there is already more than enough sadness in the fact that the great poet ended his life as a bore. The needle got stuck. He gave the same few monologues interminably and unasked, so that eventually the Fellows had to tell him to put a sock in it or else quit the table. The man who had once spoken more excitingly than anyone wound up unable to amuse a pack of dons. Like Mencken's semantic aphasia, the punishment seems Dantesque in its cruel appropriateness.

But what was he being punished for? Surely not homosexuality. He often counted himself unlucky to be so, but we all gained by it. Before the Wolfenden Report, if English homosexuals wanted to write public poetry about love then they had to write obliquely or else get arrested. Compelled to indirectness, Auden invented a new style of verbal architecture, so uniquely of its time that it will sound original for ever. Also the search for boys got him away from home. He saw the world, learned about it quickly, and stopped being silly soon enough. The worst you can say is that he suggested a greatness he never quite attained, but that might be just another way of saying that he set a pace not even he could match. Verdict: bent but oustanding.

CECIL DAY-LEWIS, ON THE OTHER HAND, was straight but average. Sean Day-Lewis has done a more thoughtful job of recounting his father's life than Osborne has done with Auden's. Indeed he has written a truly distinguished biography.

What tells against it is the irredeemable commonplaceness of the subject. All this book's reviewers seemed confident that Day-Lewis's reputation had vanished. The reputation was put there in the first place by reviewers not very different from them. Day-Lewis deserves respect as a man of letters who carried out his duties conscientiously; most of the poets praised today will be lucky if the same is said of them. As for his poetry, at its best it showed either an unforced knack for metaphor (as when he called the darkness in cinemas "furs they can afford") or, even better, an avoidance of effects in favour of sparely articulated argument ("That we who lived by honest dreams/Defend the bad against the worse"). But he reached maturity late and was always in danger of slipping back. His most common state was a protracted version of an adolescence that had never been very judicious in the first place. The young Day-Lewis bought the whole radical package, Communist Party-card included. Less forgivably, he gave advice in metrical form.

*Don't bluster, Bimbo, it won't do you any good;*
*We can be much ruder and we're learning to shoot.*

What makes this even more foolish than Auden's death of the old gang is its absolute deafness to tone. That is also what makes it less sinister.

From the political viewpoint Day-Lewis was a chump, but not even that definition should be pressed too hard. He simply had a sheltered upbringing, in a sheltered class in a sheltered land. Young people with that background didn't have to be ignorant about state terror in order to misunderstand totalitarianism. They could be told all about it and still misunderstand. It wasn't cynicism, it was innocence. Few of us are innocent now but we can claim no credit, nor should we be quick to condemn those who were silly then. It was Day-Lewis's personal misfortune that he sounded sillier than anyone else of comparable intelligence. He got out of the Communist Party but his bellicose utterances about learning to shoot were not forgotten when the real shooting started and he found he had no stomach for it. He spent a day in the army before being rescued by Harold Nicolson at Rosamund Lehmann's instigation. The revolutionary poet sat out the war in the Ministry of Information, writing captions for its illustrated publications. Day-Lewis was no doubt right to

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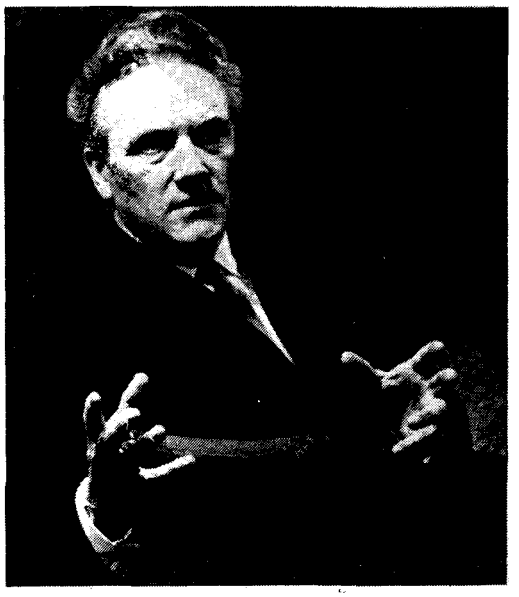
declare himself useless as a soldier. His biographer, however, might have been a bit slower to endorse this opinion: part of the point of the call-up was that you had to serve, ready-or-not, and if you ducked out then somebody else had to face the bullets meant for you.

Rosamund Lehmann was one of the seven mistresses Day-Lewis laid claim to as a lifetime's total. Professor John Carey, who is apparently set on adding unintentional humour to his repertoire of comic effects, adduced this figure as evidence that Day-Lewis had the morals of a tom-cat. Perhaps in Professor Carey's part of Oxford the tom-cats are unusually well-behaved. Morality has a lot to do with opportunity. No man scores points for chastity if women do not like him. Women obviously liked Day-Lewis very much indeed. He could easily have scored seventy or even seven hundred. Instead he confined himself to the ladies whose photographs adorn this book. Beautiful without exception, they are an impressive bunch, culminating in Jill Balcon—not, on the face of it, the sort of woman who would give herself to a humbug. He did what he could to keep them all happy, with deleterious effects on his digestive tract. In January 1945, while the Germans were counter-attacking in the Ardennes, Day-Lewis got sick-leave from the MOI: he was worn out from guilt about making love to Rosamund Lehmann. And, of course, from writing captions. But in this connection, as in every other, his most reprehensible act was to express himself in verse. Mistresses found that they were losing their attraction for him when they read about it in some sonnet sequence. His poetry was a direct expression of his life. That was one of the two main things wrong with it.

The other main thing was that he was short of inspiration. But most poets are short of that. The reviewers have searched hard in both these books for the man behind the work. In Day-Lewis's case the man is fairly easily detected but with Auden there always seems to be a discrepancy between the man people who knew him think they remember, and the poet that even people who never met him feel they know exactly.

What has been illuminating about the critical reception for both books is the concern with conduct. Britain has been lucky in her poets: there have been comparatively few shady characters. But a side effect is that criticism tends to remain an occupation for gentlemen, who rarely feel bound to discuss such a sordid matter as talent. If English literary history offered a few more examples of good writers who were bad hats, there would be less agonising over the routinely fallible behaviour from which nobody is exempt, and more willingness to get on with the genuine critical task of investigating the individual talent which scarcely anybody possesses.



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# Pulling the Strings

## *Gödel, Escher, Bach*—By JOHN NAUGHTON

THERE ARE SIGNS OF LIFE, still, in English publishing, despite the prevailing gloom. Take, for example, the astonishing success which Jonathan Cape have had with a little book entitled *Masquerade*.[1] This is the creation of a gifted painter, illustrator, and craftsman called Kit Williams, a member of the Brotherhood of English Ruralists and a Cotswold-dwelling recluse. Some time ago he had the idea of making a book which would embody—literally—a treasure hunt. The object of the hunt was (and still is, for the saga continues as I write) a beautiful wrought-gold hare, complete with inset gems, which he made and then buried (after arranging for its interment to be duly witnessed) somewhere in England. That done, he constructed a mysterious story, strewn with literary and visual riddles containing clues to the whereabouts of the treasure, and published it as a charming hardback for children.

The outcome was one of the publishing sensations of 1979, for the book sold like wildfire—and not only to children. Kit Williams' clues proved so tantalising, and his illustrations so beguiling, that youngsters all over the land found that, having consulted their parents about some abstruse clue, it was thereafter difficult to get a look-in. Irascible queues developed within households for a crack at the treasure. Practical hermeneutics became the rage, every stroke of brush or pen being scrutinised for Deeper Significance. The gardens of at least one historic house in south-west England were turned over by the spades of fevered treasure-hunters convinced they had discovered *the* location. Inducements were offered to Mr Williams to divulge his secret. The book went through several printings, and agents queued up for the foreign rights. (The thought of a Japanese translation of Kit Williams' idiomatic puns boggles the imagination. But then I am told that *Monty Python* goes down well in Germany, so who can predict which jokes will travel well?)

How can we explain such a *succès d'estime*? Plain, old-fashioned avariciousness is the obvious contender—especially since the Williams treasure was valued at £4,500 when it was committed to the earth, and the price of gold has rocketed since then. But I am inclined to think that there is more to it than mere cupidity, and that Kit Williams' (and Cape's) good fortune was to have hit on a way of harnessing an instinct more deeply innate even than gold lust. I refer, of course, to the remarkable appetite which humans appear to have for *puzzles* of all descriptions—whether their addiction is to the *Times* crossword, the brainteasers of popular scientific magazines, or the more rarefied anomalies which obsess practitioners of mathematics and of what T. S. Kuhn calls "normal science."

THESE THOUGHTS ARE PROMPTED by the success of another unusual book which also appeared last year—*Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*, by Douglas R. Hofstadter.[2] At first sight, this massive 777-page tome, subtitled "A Metaphorical Fugue on Minds and Machines in the Spirit of Lewis Carroll", littered with the typographical apparatus of symbolic logic and computer science, the strange drawings of the Dutch artist M. C. Escher, Bach scores, and frequent dialogues between Achilles, the tortoise, the crab, and other animals, might seem a non-starter in the best-seller stakes. Yet the evidence suggests otherwise. To take just one straw in the wind, my local booksellers—Heffers of Cambridge—sold out of their initial stock almost immediately, which must surely be a record of some sort for a work of such density which appears on no University reading list.

It could be argued, of course, that a sell-out of Heffers' initial order does not constitute *prima facie* evidence of bestsellerdom, and that Cambridge is a peculiar place anyway, being inhabited by precisely the kind of people most likely to be addicted to the recondite puzzles offered by Professor Hofstadter. But the national picture is not so very different.

[1] *Masquerade*. By KIT WILLIAMS. Cape, £3.50.

[2] *Gödel, Escher, Bach: An Eternal Golden Braid*. By DOUGLAS R. HOFSTADTER. Harvester Press, £10.50; Basic Books, $18.50.

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Harvester Press say that the book is one of the most successful they've published, and the reviews have been both extensive and respectful, not to say glowing. The picture in the United States is, if anything, even rosier. So I think we have to recognise that Professor Hofstadter may have pulled off a remarkable *coup*.

How has he managed it? Strange as it may seem, essentially by using much the same formula as Kit Williams in *Masquerade*—by setting up a kind of treasure hunt which is not only potentially rewarding (in the sense that the prize is deemed by the players to be worth having) but also stimulating and enjoyable to participate in. The buried treasure, in Hofstadter's case, is the promise of enlightenment on an important contemporary question, namely the conceptual viability of Artificial Intelligence. In an age dominated by uncertainty about the consequences of a computerised future, such enlightenment would be a prize worth having. As it happens there are reasons for suspecting that the Hofstadter version of the treasure may be a mirage, but the intellectual stimulation afforded by the hunt, and the dazzling ingenuity with which its author has laid out the clues, will make most readers tolerant of any ultimate failure to deliver the goods in the end. As in so many other entertainments, the game's the thing.

Certainly this seems to have been the thought uppermost in Hofstadter's mind when he embarked on the project. His primary aim, he tells us, was to produce an exploration of the imaginative kinship which he sees between the concerns of pure mathematicians on the one hand, and of biologists, graphic artists, and musicians on the other. This is the thought embodied in the title of the book, with Kurt Gödel representing the mathematicians, the Dutch artist M. C. Escher representing the visual arts, and J. S. Bach bringing up the rear for the musicians. That the (molecular) biologists and neurophysiologists have no standard-bearer may be an oversight, or, more plausibly, simply a reflection of the fact that no single individual has managed to establish an unquestioned hold over the subject area.

THE CORE OF THE BOOK concerns the achievement of the Austrian mathematician, Kurt Gödel, who in 1931 shattered a cherished project of mathematicians and logicians. This had as its goal the establishment of an unassailable logical base for mathematics, and Gödel's paper, "On Formally Undecidable Propositions of *Principia Mathematica* and Related Systems 1", demonstrated conclusively that the project was both misconceived and infeasible. The seismic shocks generated by this discovery were as cataclysmic in their own way as the two other great conceptual breakthroughs of the past century—Einstein's Theory of General Relativity and Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle. Of the three, Gödel's is arguably the least appreciated by laymen, and Hofstadter's aim is to redress the balance.

This is a formidable task, for it is impossible to understand the significance of the 1931 paper without, firstly, understanding the subtlety of its proof; secondly, grasping the nature of the research programme which it overthrew; and, thirdly, realising its implications for our contemporary aspirations to build intelligent machines. Hofstadter's book is most concerned with the first and third of these topics, so it would perhaps be helpful, before proceeding further, to sketch in the background to the second.

IT IS DIFFICULT at this distance to appreciate the glamour and excitement which surrounded mathematics in the latter half of the 19th century. The subject had enormous prestige, for two reasons. There was the demonstration of its power as a way of overcoming the limits of human experience—as for example with the discovery of non-Euclidean geometries. And there was a growing sense of wonderment at the fact that the immutable laws of nature could be given elegant and precise mathematical forms. In the light of such glorious advances, it must have seemed to many that God Himself was a mathematician. At any rate, the very success of mathematics led inexorably to the idea that clarification of its foundations would lead to insights into the nature of knowledge so dazzling as to make the efforts of traditional philosophers seem like the fumblings of blind men in a fog.[3]

From this notion there developed a major research programme of astounding ambition. The

[3] There were, of course, some doubts about the structural soundness of mathematical theory which also led to concern for shoring-up the foundations—though for more pragmatic reasons.

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full extent and goals of the project were first articulated by David Hilbert in 1904. Mathematics would be completely based on a system of axioms; new mathematical statements would be produced according to a set of rules; no two statements thus produced would contradict one another (the *consistency* criterion); and the system thus produced would be *complete*. It would produce every truth. So, simply by manipulating mathematical symbols according to the rules of deductive logic, one would eventually be able to discover all statements that were necessarily true, and one could never produce a statement that was false.

The challenge of developing such a system was taken up by Russell and Whitehead, and their attempt was embodied in *Principia Mathematica*—surely one of the greatest monuments to the power of ratiocination that our civilisation has produced. The book was received in an atmosphere laden with the heady optimism which originally stimulated its birth, and this combined with clear evidence that Russell and Whitehead had, by modifying the rules of logic, managed to circumvent a whole class of problems of the type exemplified by the Epimenides paradox (Epimenides was the Cretan who made the immortal statement: "All Cretans are liars"). Mathematicians were, they hoped, at last within sight of their Holy Grail.

It was this hope that Gödel so conclusively shattered. He established that the *consistency* of a formal system like that articulated in *Principia Mathematica* can never be proved. Further, he showed that powerful mathematical systems can never be made *complete*, that there will always be some true statement which the system cannot prove. For a young mathematician it was an astonishing achievement, after which nothing would ever be the same again.

It was not easy. Mathematicians I have questioned about the Incompleteness Theorem have always made the point that Gödel's proof—the technique he used to reach its conclusion—is something of surpassing abstract beauty. By that they mean that it is totally inaccessible to laymen. This arrogantly-thrown gauntlet is what Professor Hofstadter has now taken up with a vengeance, and he has set himself the task not only of explaining Gödel's proof, but also of communicating an appreciation of its mysterious beauty.

TALL ORDERS BOTH, but, of the two, *explanation* is probably the one most susceptible to pedagogic effort. Hofstadter's method is to introduce the reader to the central concept of a "Formal System" by constructing his own—"Typographical Number Theory", or TNT. (If these initials suggest that their author has a *penchant* for practical jokes, then that is an entirely accurate impression.) He then shows how this system—constructed from a set of axioms and mechanical rules—can be used to manipulate strings of signs in various ways. If many of these ways seem absolutely trivial to the beginner, that, I'm afraid, seems to be one of the facts of life in this business. But the triviality, it turns out, is only superficial, for, at a deeper level, still waters run. Thus the apparently meaningless strings of signs which can be formulated within a formal system like TNT can have precise interpretations. For example, the string "(SO + SO) = SSO" might be interpreted to mean "1 + 1 = 2", or some other equally sensible statement, under appropriate conditions. (The symbol "+" in a string need not have anything to do with the operation of addition as it is ordinarily understood, any more than the symbol "O" in "SO" need bear any relation to zero.)

Strings of signs in a formal system are only a means to an end. And because they have no complicated meanings, Gödel was able to invent a code for the system, which assigned a number to each formal sign. Hofstadter demonstrates how this works by devising an analogous code of his own which assigns a three-digit number to each sign of TNT. Thus "S" is coded as "123" and "+" as "112", and so on. This makes it possible to encode every string in the system as a set of numbers—rather like standard cryptograms. And just as in standard cryptograms, one can always decode them in order to determine whether they make sense and what message they contain.

The ability to translate all the signs, strings, theorems and proofs within a formal system into a sequence of numbers may seem rather superfluous. But in fact it was this which enabled Gödel to get to the level of self-referential abstraction needed to achieve his aim. Hofstadter points out that the importance of the coding is that the formal system which it encodes into numbers is one which makes statements *about* numbers. And he demonstrates the further twist that since the codings (called Gödel numbers) can be defined arithmetically statements about Gödel numbers are themselves statements about number theory which can be represented in the formal system of TNT. Thus was Gödel able to develop a way in which the formal system could, in a *precise* way, be used to examine itself.

In this way, as Hofstadter shows, Gödel was able to pin down his quarry and close off all escape routes. He needed a language which had the self-reflective power of the vernacular but not its inherent imprecision. What he sought was a precise means of examining the mathematical equivalent of the English statement "This statement is false." Using his code, he was able to create a similar statement in the formal system—e.g. a string G which could be interpreted as saying "G is not a theorem of TNT."

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SINCE TNT IS A FORMAL SYSTEM, this is no mere paradox. If we make the basic assumption required by David Hilbert for such systems—that TNT embodies valid methods of reasoning, and therefore never has falsities as theorems—then anything which is a theorem of TNT expresses a truth. So if G were a theorem, it would express a truth—which in this case would be that "G is not a theorem." The assumption that TNT never has falsities as theorems therefore leads us to conclude that G is not a theorem. In other words, there exists a true statement which is not a theorem of TNT.

Thus the trap snaps shut: Gödel had uncovered an example of a true statement in a formal system which could not be proven within that system. In addition, he was able to demonstrate that there is no way in which extra axiomatic strings can be added to a formal system in order to overcome this essential incompleteness.

If this crude paraphrase of Hofstadter's fine exegesis leaves the reader dizzy, then I can only plead incompetence and point him in the direction of the book. But it is important to see at least the outline of the approach in order to understand why Hofstadter makes such a play with the other geniuses who appear in his title—Escher and Bach. For it is the self-referential aspect of Gödel's project which stands out most clearly from Hofstadter's treatment, and in particular the Austrian's achievement in devising a way in which formal systems could be made to, as it were, turn in on themselves.

The task of communicating an appreciation of this achievement leads Hofstadter to seek analogies between Gödel's metamathematical project and the work of Escher and Bach. To those familiar with the Dutch artist's strange drawings of waterfalls which run uphill, of medieval peasants climbing stairs which run downhill, and of light and dark objects which continuously metamorphose, such analogies will not seem so surprising. Escher has the same ability as Hofstadter has observed in Gödel: he turns apparently straightforward things in on themselves.

But what of Bach? Although he is arguably the most "mathematical" composer (his only rival in this sense being, I suppose, Stockhausen), Hofstadter seems to me to skate on thinner ice here. The best example he uses is the famous *Musical Offering* (to Frederick the Great) of 1747, and particularly the "*Canon per Tonos*." This has three voices, and in it Bach contrives a succession of remarkable modulations such that, after appearing to rise steadily in key, it returns to the original key of C after six modulations, with the theoretical possibility of continuing *ad infinitum*. Hofstadter cites this as an example of Bach's ability to create the same kinds of "strange loops" which he has observed in the work of Gödel and Escher. But there is a faint air of desperation generally about his treatment of Bach, and perhaps also an implicit recognition of this in the way the composer is gradually pushed into the background.

ON THE FACE OF IT, Gödel's proof must have dramatic implications for computers and Artificial Intelligence generally. For formal systems, with their mechanical shuttling of signs, are central to the functioning of all computer systems, and Gödel's theorem should enable us to say something definite about them. J. R. Lucas, in a famous article published in *Philosophy* in 1961, argued that the most important consequence of Gödel's work was that the human brain cannot, in principle, be modelled by a computer programme—that minds cannot be explained as machines. For although computers can be programmed to generate formal systems, they can never be programmed to spot the Gödelian traps inherent in them. This latter ability, Lucas agrued, remains the sole prerogative of the human brain.

Surprisingly, perhaps, Hofstadter disagrees with this anthropocentric position, and argues vigorously against it in several ways and at several levels. His first argument seems to be pragmatic.

> Unless one is rather mystically inclined [he writes] one must conclude that any human being will simply reach the limits of his own ability to Gödelize at some point. From there on out, formal systems of that complexity, though admittedly incomplete for the Gödel reason, will have as much power as the human being.

At another level, Hofstadter argues about neurophysiology, putting forward a particular view of the "hardware" of the brain as 10,000 million neurons, each of which either fires or doesn't fire according to mechanical laws. If this "hardware" is also a formal system, he contends, then it should also be subject to the limitations exposed by Gödel.

Hofstadter wanders between these levels during the closing chapters of the book, loosing off shots at J. R. Lucas whenever he has managed to accumulate a round of ammunition. His "bottom line", however, seems to be that ultimately "Gödelization" doesn't matter, for once a formal system—however primitive—becomes powerful enough to reflect itself, even on the most elementary level, a new dynamic enters into contention. This speculation is illustrated by a number of analogies based in one instance on ants, and in another on molecular biology. Hofstadter compares the brain to an ant colony, the complex organisation of which displays strategy and awareness while individual members of the colony (like neurons in the brain) remain limited and unaware.

The ultimate destination of this line of argument

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is unclear, but it seems to lead to the conclusion that if life can emerge from the (formal) chemical components of the cell, and if consciousness can emerge from a formal system of mechanically-fired neurons, then so too will computers one day attain "human" intelligence. Gödel may yet be mocked.

WHAT IS ONE TO MAKE of such an extraordinary book? What sort of assessment would be appropriate? In a way, its astonishing sales figures tell their own story, and they suggest that Professor Hofstadter has hit some resonant frequencies, both in terms of the subject matter he has chosen and the way he has constructed the spirals of his highly individualistic text.

This suggests that assessments are likely to be highly subjective. For example, given Hofstadter's aim of enabling laymen to understand *and* appreciate Gödel's theorem, it follows that the judgment of, say, professional mathematicians is not as relevant as it might be on a more conventional text in the same area. Similarly, Hofstadter's jokey style, his inveterate punning ("I think therefore I add", he says at one point, after explaining the centrality of additive phenomena in brain functioning), and his wildly eclectic interests (Bach to Babbage, Escher to Epimenides, Turing to Tarski, AI to Zen) will irritate and/or delight different readers in different ways.

I find myself both exhilarated and exasperated. Hofstadter has clearly produced a work of dazzling vitality, ingenuity, and charm. He has thrown light on some of the darkest (and most important) corners of mathematics, and caused us to celebrate anew the genius of an Austrian mathematician who, although he changed the world, has never been widely understood—except by his peers. And he has justified and exemplified his contention that there are significant analogies between the imaginative feats of thinkers whom we normally place in totally separate cultural categories. Hofstadter is not the first to make such a contention, of course (P. B. Medawar is just one other advocate who springs immediately to mind), but no one has spelled it out with quite so much energy and stamina.

On the other hand, these merits are vitiated—sometimes inevitably—by serious defects. The book is too long, even given the scale of its author's aims. It is outrageously self-indulgent in some places, and wilfully obscurantist in others (for example the passages about Zen). It is lopsided in the sense that there's a serious imbalance between the level of exposition and argument which goes into explicating Gödel's Theorem in the first part, and the glib and often evasive arguments about the consequences of the Theorem in the second. And if Hofstadter's aim was to convince us that Gödel's work did *not* rule out the possibility of Artificial Intelligence, then I don't think he has succeeded. For this reader at least, Gödel still rules OK.

# National Myths

## *Recent Fiction—By* TOM PAULIN

MYTHS ARE RARE NOWADAYS, possibly because we have become dull positivists who mistake imaginative explanations for lies. John le Carré, however, is a devout and brilliant myth-maker who has raised the jargon of office politics into the terms of a national epic:

> The Circus in those days was like a bombed-out building, [Smiley] remembered; its officers scattered, its budget hamstrung, its agents blown or dead or laid off. Bill Haydon's unmasking was an open wound in everyone's mind: they called it the Fall and shared the same sense of primeval shame.

The hurt is to the English psyche and at the end of le Carré's masterpiece, *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*, the wounded patriot, Jim Prideaux, avenges the betrayed consciousness of Albion. Not since Auden—whose early work le Carré most subtly draws on—has a writer succeeded in making the English landscape so intensely political. Le Carré's Cornish coastlines, vistas of dying elms, playing-fields around mouldering prep schools, juju men scanning the horizons, are haunted by ghosts from the public world of intrigue, vigilance and obscurely dirty tricks.

In many ways he resembles Spenser, whose mercifully unfinished epic offers a myth of the English consciousness struggling to achieve its Anglican identity. Karla is the Leninist equivalent of Spenser's Papal Archimago, while Ann Smiley is the false Duessa, a neurotic metamorphosis of Una who is Truth and the soul of the nation. Smiley is the Red Cross Knight who is given advice by an aged holy man called Contemplation:

> *Then seeke this path, that I to thee presage,*
> *Which after all to heaven shall thee send;*

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*Then peacably thy painefull pilgrimage*
*To yonder same Hierusalem do bend,*
*Where is for thee ordaind a blessed end:*
*For thou emongst those Saints, whom thou doest see,*
*Shalt be a Saint, and thine owne nations frend*
*And Patrone: thou Saint* **George** *shalt called bee,*
*Saint George of mery England, the signe of victoree.*

Like the Dantean shade or "compound familiar ghost" in *Little Gidding*, Smiley is a shadowy absolute who incarnates the finest contemplative wisdom. And this is stressed when a devoutly religious police superintendent compares Smiley to an abbey which is "made up of all sorts of conflicting ages and styles and convictions."

If this suggests that Smiley is an establishment figure then we must very firmly distinguish him from what that term normally means—he will not be found sleeping off his lunch in the library of the Travellers' Club. The "iron quietness" of his demeanour depends on a tough and unillusioned view of Western values ("I can see through Eastern values just as you can through our Western ones", he tells Karla in *Tinker, Tailor*). He is a '30s intellectual—with, naturally, a European sensibility—who has made a severe commitment to the cause of social democracy, and yet he knows how mushy and contradictory that cause is in comparison with more definite ideologies: "I am a thief of the spirit, he thought despondently. Faithless I am pursuing another man's convictions."

The unique Englishness which Smiley represents is caught in this passage from the latest novel, *Smiley's People*,[1] where he broods on a gnomic and urgent statement that has strange mythic echoes, "*Tell Max that it concerns the Sandman*":

> he still knew that it was just possible, against all the odds, that he had been given, in late age, a chance to return to the rained-off contests of his life and play them after all. If that was so, then no Ann, no false peace, no tainted witness to his actions, should disturb his lonely quest.

The significant word "quest" links le Carré's story with that ancient imaginative world of wandering forests, fluid identities, and mysterious fortresses just off the beaten track. Le Carré's use of aliases—Gerstman becomes Karla who becomes the Sandman who is then "too important to exist"—is curiously Ovidian, and if at times he emphasises the protean too self-consciously it would be quite wrong to dismiss him as the Tolkien of espionage. He is a rigorously serious writer and his remark that Smiley "knows that most of life is led below the surface, and that people are very secretive creatures—secret even from themselves"[2] connects the world of official secrets with the private world of emotional betrayals and evasions. An imagination capable of making such connections must be mythic in its ambitions, and it's this direction which gives his fictions their tantalising permanence. He is not, therefore, the kind of writer whom Clive James has termed "a prisoner of clarity."

FOR LE CARRÉ, people are betrayed by whatever streak of personal tenderness they possess, rather like Adam in *Paradise Lost* whose commitment to Eve after she has eaten the apple is at once his downfall and the proof of his saving humanity. Thus Karla is both a committed absolutist and a flawed human being. Smiley, whose private wound is public knowledge, considers this paradox:

> And there is this other Karla, Karla of the human heart after all, of the one great love, the Karla flawed by humanity. I should not be deterred if, in order to defend his weakness, he resorts to the methods of his trade.

[1] *Smiley's People*. By JOHN LE CARRÉ. Hodder and Stoughton, £5.95.

[2] From an interview with Miriam Gross (*The Observer*, 3 February). This compulsive secrecy is beautifully caught in a pun in *Tinker, Tailor* where Jerry Westerby lifts a finger to denote a Red Indian's feather before padding off "into his own reserves."

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Smiley decides that Karla isn't "fireproof" because he's a fanatic whose "lack of moderation will be his downfall." Essentially, le Carré is saying that deep down we are all squashy liberals, and the central inspiration of *Smiley's People* is an almost despairing wish to prove this and to assert the superiority of Western to Eastern values. Le Carré's imagination has a quiet brooding heroic quality and a reined-in bitterness.

His mythic urgency is apparent in his presentation of Karla's daughter, who is mentally ill and who spins tales which her nurses disbelieve:

> How her father was a secret prince more powerful than the Tsar. How he ruled at night, as the owls rule while the hawks are at rest. How his secret eyes followed her wherever she went, how his secret ears heard every word she spoke. And how, one night, hearing her mother praying in her sleep, he sent his men for her and they took her into the snow and she was never seen again: not even by God, He was looking for her still.

This schizophrenic myth brilliantly images the nature of power—how natural and cruel it is—and at the same time it explores Alexandra's equally natural hunger for a religious explanation of secular phenomena. In one extraordinary moment Alexandra tells Smiley that he represents "the forgiveness of the authorities" and then asks him if he is God. No, he replies, "I'm just an ordinary person." But we remember the scene early in the novel where Smiley appears in the "religious light between dawn and morning", and we remember, too, that he has been called "an abbey." He is therefore a saintly confessor, a divine, a human absolute whom we can trust. This is a complex and hard-won assertion of English superiority, and only a combination of le Carré's imaginative *gravitas* and Smiley's truly European cultivation prevents it from appearing absurdly and offensively patriotic (though anyone interested in the deep structures of the English mind would do well to consider le Carré).

In the closing pages of the novel we stare with Smiley across the Berlin wall and see his strict mildness waver as an evil desire for revenge touches him. His companion, Guillam, reflects: "It is a place of no compromise . . . a place of no third way. Whatever reservations he might occasionally have about the Western freedom, here, at this border, like most other things, they stopped dead."

The Wall is like a great breach in nature, and Karla's defection to the West represents an unequivocal victory for good. Haydon's treachery—"the Fall"—is atoned for, and the divided and sceptical Western spirit is healed. Although le Carré writes magnificently here, I'm not convinced by what he says—Karla has to exist as an absolutist and cannot be broken in this humanly relativistic way. In any case, Karla is saving his own skin by defecting, and le Carré is trivialising Western values by identifying them with that wish.

The ending—and one doesn't have to be a committed Marxist to recognise this—*is* sentimental, and I'm forced to recognise its weakness. Nevertheless, *Smiley's People* is a very fine novel—taut, subtle, exciting and deeply serious. After the flaccid and disappointing *The Honourable Schoolboy* le Carré has rediscovered his profound imaginative resources.

V. S. PRITCHETT also has a mythic imagination which is reinforced by a habit of shrewd and quirky observation. This is apparent in "The Spanish Bed" from his latest collection, *On The Edge of the Cliff*,[3] where a bar-room raconteur tells a story about a novelist called John Osorio Grant:

> The tale was that Grant had gone out one afternoon and, in classic fashion, had got stuck on the mud in a falling tide and had had to sit there half the night. They added that a girl was in the boat: this is a common myth in English estuaries.

Only the most unusual imagination is capable of that last sly reminder.

Similarly, in "The Fig Tree" the narrator remarks, "It is well known, if you run a nursery, that very nice old ladies sometimes nip off a stem for a cutting or slip small plants into their bags. Stealing is a form of flirtation with them." And then he reflects on this delicately erotic situation:

> There was a myth at our Nursery that when a box of plants was missing or some rare expensive shrub had been dug up and was gone, this was the work of a not altogether imaginary person called Thompson who lived in a big house where the garden abutted on our wall. Three camellias went one day, and because of the price he was somehow promoted by the girls and became known as "Colonel" Thompson. He had been seen standing on a stepladder and looking over our wall.

It is remarkable to see how Autolycus can be so easily assimilated into the English class system, as though his natural lawlessness must be accommodated within a social code.

Pritchett is one of the great masters of the short story and his deftly tentative narrative manner has a dry and playful fragrance. His characters are always trying to turn dialogue into monologue and they often become besotted by certain words and phrases ("Gin and women. Chop. Chop." is the favourite refrain of one character—in fact this vocal pattern is all he really wants to convey). In

[3] *On the Edge of the Cliff and Other Stories*. By V. S. PRITCHETT. Chatto and Windus, £4.95.

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"The Vice-Consul" Pritchett creates an intensely realistic fantasy-world where the central character talks half to himself, half to McDowell who is "a long-legged man with an unreasonable chin and emotional knees":

> "It stands to reason," he said, expanding. "What do they get to eat? Dried meat and manioc covered in bird droppings, fish that tastes of newspaper from the bloody river. No fresh milk, no fresh meat, no fresh vegetables—everything has to be flown in and they can't afford it."

It's then that McDowell intrudes his private grievance which involves a lost set of dentures, a girl, a rainstorm, fornication, alligators and handbags. The atmosphere is comic, wistfully guilt-ridden, and drably pointless—though this last quality is off-set by the sharp glances which the story throws at *The Heart of the Matter*. It ends with the captain going on to tell "some tale about a man who claimed to have a cat that backed horses", and the vice-consul musing that "he was the only human being in the town."

Pritchett's imagination has a wry obliquity, an engaging, teasing strangeness, and this collection contains several perfectly realised stories—the natural symbolism of the lasso in "The Wedding" is both a means of acute social and psychological exploration and a formal device which structures the narrative. Like "The Vice-Consul", this is one of Pritchett's finest stories—beautiful in the wisdom of its vision and the perfection of its form.

FOR JOHN MORROW a myth is both an elaborate and strategic lie and a way of telling the truth. In his collection of contemporary folk tales[4] he draws on a vigorous and seldom noticed oral tradition of northern Irish story-telling. Morrow is the author of a brilliant comic novel, *The Confessions of Proinsias O'Toole*, which treats the Ulster situation in a violently comic manner, and the folk-memory which informs his art is that of the urban working class—a wild, often cruel imagination which eagerly absorbs the contemporary and transforms it into legend:

> Myth-making can be studied at its best in the morning riot courts, when first drafts are presented to wide-eyed magistrates. From these fantasy sessions one would deduce that Belfast has a sizeable population of unemployed stone-masons, company directors and horse-riders (see the *Belfast Telegraph*, July, 1970) who frequently take off in the small hours, driven by a sudden whim to visit widowed/crippled/blind parents, to search for stray dogs, or to buy chips. This might be acceptable as yet another social problem of our unquiet times; but that every one of these night-strollers should then trip over semi-automatic pistols—which they lift to admire the workmanship—or milk bottles full of petrol—which they are about to put out of the childer's way when the Army arrives—is pure artistry.

Out of the surge of the folk-memory come figures like Duncher McAnuff, Joe McConkey, Billy McCord and Savage Mary—figures who, in Yeats's phrase, "engross the present and dominate memory."

Central to Morrow's imagination is the sense that one of his narrators comes to share: "At that time I had not yet outgrown some juvenile ideas about 'Honour' and 'Fair Play'—products, I might add, not of my Belfast slum environment but of the English public school myth propagated by *The Magnet* and *Boy's Own*." And as in many folk-tales the ruthlessness that lies at the core of all experience is revealed. At times Morrow resembles the Kipling of "Mrs Bathurst" and "A Sahib's War", and this similarity is most powerfully apparent in "Beginnings" where an adolescent's sexual fantasies are "cribbed from an album of photographs his Da had looted from a dead Turk in

[4] *Northern Myths and Other Stories*. By JOHN MORROW. Blackstaff Press (3 Galway Park, Belfast), £2.95.

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the Dardanelles." This historical reference is just one example of the mythically actual thread that runs through the stories—the Somme, the Titanic, the Dardanelles, Murmansk, all become intense images which locate the struggles, sufferings and energies of many generations.

IN "SAVAGE MARY" an old woman's public flyting of her neighbours is tolerated by the community because she represents "the vindictive Dark Powers", and in many ways these stories enact the bacchic release which story-telling provides in a tight community—as a force the narrative urge is both socially cohesive and wildly anarchic. It simultaneously binds the community together, draws on the communal past, and supplies a creative outlet for pent-up passions. Morrow's image for this narrative urgency (an urgency which most naturally depends on a live audience) is the experience of folk music, and this is most vividly apparent in the "wild skirling climax" of the concert in "Hunch." Like Joyce, Morrow is in various senses tapping the primeval powers which manifest themselves in the last stanza of "Finnegan's Wake":

> *Jack Malony ducked his head*
> *When a bucket of whiskey flew at him;*
> *He ducked, and falling on the bed,*
> *The whiskey scattered over Tim.*
> *Bedad, he revives, and see how he rises,*
> *Finnegan rising in the bed saying*
> *"Whirl yer whiskey around like blazes.*
> *Thundering jazez! did yis think me dead?"*

These lines fuse sex, death, resurrection, intoxication and wild brawling, and what is remarkable about the folk imagination is its way of over-riding the great division between life and death. It locates the resurrection in the self-delighting wildness of sheer rhythm, or in the mesmeric fascination of narrative. Spontaneous comic hyperbole is one of the essential qualities of this fascination:

> If disease can be seen as water, the child was a sponge; his "mentions" in *The Lancet* during the first eight years of his life equal the "Hunch Shaughnessy" file in his press-cutting agency today; a score of doctors made reputations by merely diagnosing the maladies he played host to—one of which I've mentioned, the throat infection, last known as the curse of inbred Bulgarian royalty in the eighteenth century, which left behind a voice that can alibi the most abysmal lyric.

Another device of the mythic imagination is to relish the historical and barbaric "yawp" of certain words—thus the missing place-name in "O'Fuzz" has a sound which is hilariously described as "long and glottal, half-roads between a Gaelic battle-cry and a Planter's curse." The third device—it is primarily associated with Savage Mary—is that of a lacerating rhetoric which possesses an operatic and inebriated violence and yet doesn't actually scathe anyone. Its literary tradition stretches back at least as far as medieval poetry.

Morrow possesses a prodigal imaginative intelligence which is brilliantly comic, sometimes rather too sprawling, but always fiercely certain of itself. He writes at a peak of inspiration, as though on a permanent binge, and his series of hyperborean myths deserves a wide readership.

BRIAN MOORE'S LAST NOVEL, *The Doctor's Wife*, was in part a clever reworking of *Madame Bovary* which traced the defection of a middle-class Belfast housewife from her husband and society. Moore has always been gifted with an ability that Fay Weldon has recently denied male novelists can possess—the ability of imagining a woman's experience. In his new novel, *The Mangan Inheritance*,[5] Moore displays a fine and reverberating irony as he takes the feminist subject of the discovery of identity by one partner in a marriage, and realigns it by making the dominant partner a successful actress (Beatrice Abbot) and the submissive partner a failed writer (James Mangan).

The opening section of the novel is a beautifully poised narrative which begins with the aftermath of the separation and then traces the experience of the marriage. Moore's prose is sharp and crisp as he recapitulates that experience—Mangan becoming more and more passive and self-effacing until he dwindles into the question, "Aren't you Beatrice Abbot's husband?" Mangan's attempt to achieve his identity involves a traditional—even mythic—journey back to Ireland. There is a family tradition that the Mangans are descended from the famous Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan, and the rest of the novel is concerned with Mangan's search for proof of his ancestry. Unfortunately, Moore switches into a mode of Hibernian Gothic which reads like the exploration of a private obsession with guilt and "the impure delight of the forbidden." Dark Rosaleen, that enduring myth of Irish nationhood, makes a predictable appearance and behaves like a preposterous *houri*, and there is a great deal of merely ersatz Irishness.

At his best Moore is a quietly magnificent novelist, and two of his earlier novels, *The Feast of Lupercal* and *I Am Mary Dunne*, are masterpieces. The first hundred pages of *The Mangan Inheritance* are as good as anything he has written, but the rest of the novel is mostly kitsch. There are

[5] *The Mangan Inheritance*. By BRIAN MOORE. Jonathan Cape, £5.50.

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some fine and authentic moments among the rain-swept fantasies, though Moore's sense of history is confused and superficial (he believes there was a Fenian movement at the time of the '98 rebellion). It's perhaps this sentimental expatriate view of Ireland which accounts for the bogus nature of the story.

JULIAN BARNES, like Moore, defines his narrative against a traditional subject. He takes the novel about growing up in a stifling society, writes it, and then instead of showing his protagonist defeated by suburban marriage and a mortgage he courageously and ironically presents Christopher basking in his suburban happiness. With a glance at Wallace Stevens he marries the aesthetic and the bourgeois:

> On Sunday mornings I slip out of the house early. I turn left, past sensible detached houses: Ravenshoe, with its scatter of horse-chestnut flowers on the pavement; Vue de Provence, with its green shutters; East Coker, with a smirk-provoking carport. They have their names carved in Gothic letters on slices of wood which are screwed to trees.

The ironic allusion to Eliot's "in my end is my beginning" cleverly points to the circular form of the story which, in a very English way, locates Alexander Selkirk behind a privet hedge in Pinner. And so the myth which Defoe created in *Robinson Crusoe* is neatly reworked in *Metroland*.[6]

There are several highly amusing comic scenes, a tight cartesian style, and many sharp unexpected reflections. There is, too, a fundamental decency which plays against the sometimes arid effort at narrative geometry and pure style. However, Barnes's treatment of Christopher's experience of growing up is flawed by his dedication to that ethic of privacy which the third section of the novel celebrates. His fictive symmetry—imaged in an electricity pylon and implied by the Eiffel Tower—cannot allow Christopher's relationship with Marion to be traced in any detail. As a couple they dovetail in a reassuringly neat manner which rather overlooks what Henry James terms "clumsy life." Also, the connection between private decency and that other world of salaries and anger is made in a most peculiar manner. Christopher works in publishing for a firm called Harlow Tewson:

> I've been an editor there for five years, with no regrets. It also doesn't make me feel shitty: we don't fight against making money, but we use good people, and we produce good books. At the moment, for instance, I'm working on a book about Italian Renaissance painting: a TV tie-in to go with a series of drama-documentaries based on Vasari.

The voice here is gruff in the face of possible accusations of sentimental complacency. It's a stiff-upper-lip tone resonant with British stoicism and it casts all irony aside. However, absolute irony is a scarifying knowledge to have to live with, and Christopher's kindly and witty decency is in certain ways preferable—it is gracefully civil and engagingly Horatian.

*Metroland* is a stimulating and interesting first novel which plays some extremely nimble tricks with the novel form. It touches on a myth of the Home Counties and historical absence, but it employs that myth rather as a structural device than as a groundswell of experience. Myths, after all, are the ghosts of experience and they tend to elude a logical and trim scepticism—though Barnes's vision of an aesthete metamorphosing into a suburban Crusoe has that combination of strangeness and recognition which is essential to myth.

[6] *Metroland*. By JULIAN BARNES. Jonathan Cape, £4.95.

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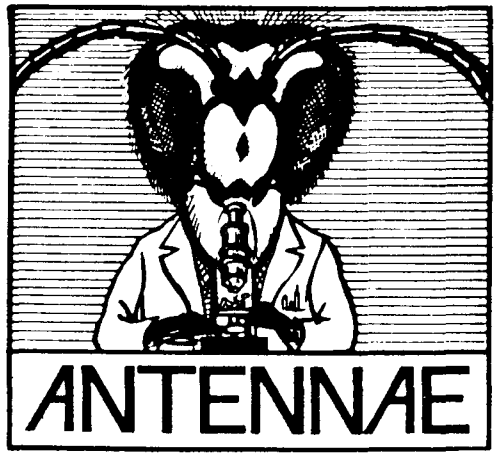


*Beyond "the Magic Bullet"*

# Reconciling Health & Disease

## *By Bernard Dixon*

LATE IN 1979, a major international medical journal published a substantial paper questioning "The Concept of Disease" and an editorial with the same title.[1] The event is significant for it focused attention on what might be considered a surprising circumstance.

The term disease is by no means clear or succinct; it is ambiguous. Yet this follows a century of unprecedented progress in medicine, founded on a simple, immensely powerful idea which categorised and defined distinct diseases with great precision. That there should now be debate around this issue confirms that the paradigm no longer holds conviction. Indeed, both in clinical medicine and research, it is now apparent that a once-fruitful concept has had its day. The notion that has formed the central axis of advancement for the past hundred years lacks explanatory potency to deal with the great burden of ill-health today—whether cancer, coronary heart disease, and much mental illness in the West, or the horrendous morbidity associated with poverty in the less developed countries.

Signs of controversy in the medical press confirm that rethinking is under way. But the abundant lesson of recent decades is that a prolific conceptual tool can continue to dominate medical thinking and practice long after it has ceased to reap creative rewards. Even today, much of orthodox medicine is straitjacketed by this concept, despite the fact that striking and unexpected progress is now being made by practitioners and researchers who have chosen to break away. Some of the most significant steps have been taken recently by those who have consciously placed medicine's central tenet on one side and dared to allow that it no longer provides an exhaustive account of health and disease.

THE IDEA AT ISSUE is specific aetiology—the notion that particular diseases have particular characters, are caused by particular agents, and, as a corollary, can be dealt with by administering particular drugs.

Girolamo Fracastoro glimpsed this truth around the year 1540, but his speculations were far ahead of their time and had no tangible influence on the evolution of medicine. Specific aetiology really took off with the discovery of "germs" a century ago. It is epitomised by a demonstration made in typically theatrical style by Louis Pasteur in 1881. On 5 May in that year, before a large crowd at Pouilly-le-Fort, Pasteur injected 24 sheep with a preparation he believed would protect them against a ghastly and usually deadly disease: anthrax. A further 24 animals were left without injections. After giving booster doses twelve days later, Pasteur administered lethal amounts of virulent anthrax bacilli to all of the sheep. When the crowd returned on 2 June, they found every one of the vaccinated animals in perfect health. But the carcases of 22 unvaccinated sheep lay on the grass and the two survivors were in the late throes of anthrax, with black blood oozing out of their mouths and noses.

The mathematical exactitude of this result was sufficient to convince the most ungenerous sceptic. What Pasteur had done was to take the particular bacterium responsible for anthrax, weaken it so that it was no longer able to cause disease but *was* still capable of protecting an animal against that disease, and then prove its efficacy against the microbe in its most pathogenic form. Pasteur's vaccine would have been totally ineffective against any other organism except the anthrax bacillus. The basis of his experiment—and the source of his total confidence that the demonstration would succeed—was the one-to-one relationship between a disease and its specific causative agent.

THIS *is one of a series of columns planned by Arthur Koestler, for which he acts as an editorial adviser; his article "Horizons in Space" inaugurated the series in the October 1979 issue.*

[1] E. J. M. Campbell *et al.*, "The Concept of Disease", *British Medical Journal* (1979, No. 2, p.757).



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MANY EXPERIMENTERS contributed to the emergence of the germ theory, which crystallised the idea of specific aetiology. One was the Dutchman Antony van Leeuwenhoek, in the 17th century. He was the first person to see "animalcules" through his simple but beautifully honed microscopes and thus confirm the existence of the microbial world. Another key figure was the Englishman Thomas Sydenham who, around the same time, made the radically new suggestion that it was possible to identify specific diseases, thus separating the malady from the sick person. In his *Methodus curandi febres*, published in 1666, he argued that some illnesses were due to particular agents fighting against the natural healing powers of the body. Though commonplace today, this was a revolutionary proposal at the time.

Another important pioneer was Ferdinand Cohn, who, working in Breslau, Silesia, a century ago, rejected claims that the microbial world then being explored was essentially pleomorphic—that fungi and bacteria were just different manifestations of the same forms of life. He showed that individual species of bacteria behaved predictably and could be identified and classified—a vital prerequisite for the germ theory. Then, in 1835, an Italian lawyer, Agostino Bassi, demonstrated that a particular fungus caused muscardine disease of the silkworm. This was the first scientific report of a disease caused by a transmissible parasitic microbe.

The three central figures were, however, Louis Pasteur, Robert Koch, and Paul Ehrlich. Pasteur, a chemist, made the crucial discovery that natural processes such as fermentation of beer and wine, the souring of milk, and the development of rancidity in butter were caused by corresponding, specific micro-organisms. He went on to show that animal and human diseases, from anthrax to rabies, were produced in the same way. It was Robert Koch, a protégé of Cohn, who painstakingly worked out a list of stringent criteria that must be satisfied before an organism could be incriminated positively as the agent of a disease. Known as Koch's postulates, these have guided research in medical microbiology ever since.

THE IMMEDIATE RESULT of these breakthroughs was that, between 1879 and 1900, the causative agents of at least 22 infections were discovered. Towards the end of the century, it seemed that micro-organisms might be isolated from almost all diseases. Thus was born the high promise of specific therapy. Paul Ehrlich was the man who initiated the drive for chemical weapons—"magic bullets"—that would destroy disease-causing microbes without harming the body's own tissues. Salvarsan, used to treat human syphilis for the first time in 1911, was the earliest and most dramatic innovation. After that came a vastly impressive flow of novel drugs, vaccines, and antibiotics with which to vanquish specific infections.

From the time of Joseph Meister, the little Alsatian boy cured of rabies by one of Pasteur's vaccines, to the spectacular conquest of pneumonia by penicillin, the theory of specific aetiology was firmly vindicated. During the same period, it was proving to be a potent tool, and capable of even greater precision, in other areas of medicine. Vitamin deficiencies like scurvy and rickets could be remedied miraculously by administering particular chemical substances. And inherited disorders such as phenylketonuria were shown to be results of discrete defects in body chemistry. Lack of a particular hormone, insulin, proved to be the cause of diabetes. Then, in the late 1950s, Vernon Ingram in Cambridge traced sickle-cell anaemia to just one abnormal amino acid out of 300 in the haemoglobin molecule. Cause-and-effect at this level reflects an almost Calvinistic determinism in medicine. That is the approach that has, over the century, given doctors tools of unprecedented power.

IRONICALLY, the shaky foundations of specific aetiology were apparent even in the midst of its triumphs. René Dubos[2] points out that most of the people in the room in 1882 when Koch announced his discovery of the tubercle bacillus had undoubtedly been infected by this germ at some stage in their lives. Virtually all city dwellers in Europe were then parasitised by *Mycobacterium tuberculosis*, yet only a tiny proportion suffered in any way. In these circumstances—universal infection, but infrequent disease—the "real" cause of tuberculosis is not the bacillus but malnutrition, fatigue, and the other accompaniments of poverty which turn harmless parasitism into overt ill health.

Koch and Pasteur were not, of course, misguided in their work. But they wanted to prove that micro-organisms caused specific diseases, and their genius was in designing experiments that unequivocally supported that hypothesis. They thus minimised all environmental and bodily factors that might modify the outcome of their tests.[3] Nutrition in particular is ignored by the theory of specific aetiology. In the real world, it is of crucial importance. Measles, for example, is a virtually

[2] René Dubos, *Mirage of Health* (1960), p.89.

[3] Ironically, Pasteur himself often referred to the importance of constitution and environment in relation to disease. He even wished to spend time investigating them, but the ferocity of the controversies surrounding his work, which demanded a formidable amount of experimental work to convince his critics, prevented him from doing so. See René Dubos, *Louis Pasteur, Free Lance of Science* (Gollancz, 1951).

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universal infection in all social classes. But the chances of serious illness depend largely on a child's general health. In many parts of the Third World today, measles is still a killer.

Though controversy rages around the issue, it seems clear that anti-microbial warfare founded on specific aetiology has been a considerably lesser force historically than might be imagined. Thus Thomas McKeown argues[4] that its impact on declining mortality in Britain was not significant until the second quarter of this century—by which time the largest proportion of the total fall had already been achieved. He calculates that the advent of vaccination against tuberculosis made little or no difference to the decline of deaths from this disease in England and Wales. Streptomycin reduced mortality by about half when it was introduced in 1947. But over the whole period since cause of death was first registered, its contribution to the fall in deaths was only about 3%. Despite the dramatic cures effected by "magic bullets", the most pronounced improvements in our defences against infection have flowed from improved sanitation, hygiene, nutrition, and living conditions.

Medical science has resisted this realisation; indeed, it has continued to contrive experimental approaches which, as with Pasteur, excluded from the picture anything but simplistic encounters between disease-causing agents and susceptible hosts. But the mood is changing. One example is a remarkable piece of research reported from the Common Cold Research Unit, Salisbury.[5] In scrupulously controlled tests, Dr R. Totman and his colleagues inoculated 48 volunteers with common cold viruses. They then told half of them that after the experiment their stomach juices would have to be examined via a stomach tube—the intention not being actually to do this but simply to make the subjects slightly apprehensive. The result was impressive: the cold symptoms (assessed by an independent clinician) in these 24 subjects were much more severe than those in the control group. Anxiety, it seems, had a real effect on the course of the volunteers' respiratory illness. That the mind can affect our vulnerability to infection may well be an intuitive piece of knowledge for many people. But for orthodox medical microbiology to take the idea seriously is something radically new.

CANCER is another field where decades of searching for *the* cause—an approach founded on the doctrine of specific aetiology—has not yielded commensurate dividends. Indeed, although current political interest centres on carcinogens in the environment, and while some estimates relate as many as 75% of malignant tumours to such agents, increasing attention is being paid to quite different factors that may be equally or more important in determining the onset and outcome of cancer. While the evidence linking tobacco smoking causally with lung cancer is now exceedingly strong, for example, it remains true that some heavy smokers do not contract the disease. Psychological state may be important here. That idea was originated over a decade ago by D. J. Kissen,[6] who found that smokers with lung cancer were significantly more liable to deny and repress their emotions than a matched group of smokers. Dr S. Greer[7] and others have recently taken up this line of investigation again. The emerging picture is that the mind does indeed have a strong influence on cancer. This probably operates via the body's immune system, which may normally curb the appearance of malignant cells but whose efficiency is impaired in some psychological circumstances.

JUST AS NUTRITION modifies, and may indeed dominate, the outcome of infectious illness, so too diet is increasingly recognised as of major significance in relation to cancer. Dr D. P. Burkitt[8] precipitated this interest by arguing that the Western diet, with its relative deficiency in fibre and high proportion of meat, fat, and refined carbohydrates, plays a role in the production of malignancy. He based this thesis on observations that several diseases, including appendicitis and diverticulitis as well as cancers, are common in developed countries but rare in rural Africa. Corresponding with this disparity is the contrast between the Western low-residue diet and that in rural Africa, which is more bulky and passes more quickly through the intestines. The evidence is far from complete, but this already seems to be a more productive research avenue than investigations anchored to the rock of specific aetiology.

PERHAPS THE OUTSTANDING AREA where the theory has failed, however, is in accounting for the modern plague of cardiovascular disease. A recent report by a working party of the Royal College of Surgeons and the British Cardiac Society, for example—a comprehensive survey

[4] Thomas McKeown, *The Modern Rise of Population* (1976).

[5] R. Totman *et al.*, "Cognitive Dissonance, Stress and Virus-induced Common Colds", *Journal of Psychosomatic Medicine* (1977, No. 20, p.55).

[6] D. J. Kissen, "Psycho-Social Factors, Personality, and Lung Cancer in Men Aged 55 to 64", *Journal of Medical Psychology* (1967, No. 40, p.29).

[7] S. Greer, "Psychological Enquiry: A Contribution to Cancer Research", *Psychological Medicine* (1979, No. 9, p.29).

[8] D. P. Burkitt, "Epidemiology of Cancer of the Colon and Rectum", *Cancer* (1971, No. 28, p.3).

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intended to throw light on a condition that is the major cause of death in middle and old age in the developed countries—owes nothing whatever to the concept of specific aetiology.[9] It covers the many factors—lifestyle, smoking, blood pressure, fats in the bloodstream, obesity, physical activity, and stress—known to influence the likelihood of coronary heart disease. There is no hint of a specific cause or cure. The report does no more than identify "risk factors"—and advisedly clouds the issue even further by admitting that "factor" implies a more explicit degree of causation than we really know to exist.

The bequest of specific aetiology includes not only impotence in describing much ill health. It also includes positively unhelpful influences on doctors, patients, and researchers. Hospital patients are often dealt with not as individuals but as clinical specimens labelled with particular categories of affliction and treated exclusively by corresponding specialists. Drugs are advertised for apparently specific complaints—"night starvation", "tired blood", etc.—when these terms are literally meaningless. Bereavement and other personal and social problems are "medicalised" and dealt with by chemotherapy.

Treatment of disease has taken precedence over the maintenance of health. Powerful antibiotics are handed out for trivial maladies as well as serious ones, thereby losing their genuine value as pathogenic bacteria become resistant. And in the Third World those same medicines are all too often and inappropriately dispensed in circumstances where they cannot conceivably have lasting value. One report[10] cites the case of a man with hookworm anaemia, progressively disabled until he gives up work completely. Admitted to hospital, he receives drug treatment and skilled attention and returns to his employment. But the man's living conditions are as bad as before, and he catches hookworm again. The medical expertise he has required, at considerable expense to a struggling economy, has had little real effect. Here, specific aetiology is an irrelevant concept.

WHEN THE World Health Organisation met in 1977 for its annual assembly, delegates spent much of their time talking not about the need for more specific therapies, but about the vastly greater importance for health of developments in food production and living conditions. Malnutrition, rather than malaria, cancer or heart disease, was identified as the world's greatest single public health problem by the year 2000. That meeting marked a turning point for WHO, which now sees primary health care as inextricably linked with political action rather than as simply a matter of mobilising specialist expertise. In the same time, there have been signs of a similar broadening of interest in medical practice and research—on the one hand, an increased preoccupation with social and geographical patterns of illness; on the other, a return to a Hippocratic conception of sick people, in all their wholeness and variability, rather than a sharp focus on discrete diseases.

RENEWED INTEREST in psychosomatic medicine, formerly a much-resisted category of description,[11] is one sign of the new mood. Dr Greer's latest paper, for example, shows convincingly that the course of breast cancer can be affected by a woman's psychological state.[12] His work, the first long-term, prospective study ever conducted, established that a favourable outcome was more common in patients who reacted with either "a fighting spirit" or denial than those who showed stoic acceptance or a helpless/hopeless reaction. And the latest results of one survey that *was* established four decades ago in Harvard show strikingly how good mental health retards the deterioration of physical health in midlife.[13] A study of 204 men, selected as adolescents and followed yearly, it demonstrates a relation between previous mental health and subsequent physical health that is statistically significant even when the effects of family history, smoking, alcohol and other factors are excluded.

Another field of activity is the search for patterns of ill-health as an alternative to the pursuit of specific causation. With multiple sclerosis, for example, the scrutiny of tissues for causative agents has produced nothing but confusion and a surfeit of counterclaims. It is epidemiological research which has yielded by far the most convincing explanation: that childhood infection with some as yet unknown agent in genetically predisposed individuals leaves a dormant virus that may, years later, give rise to symptoms of the disease.[14] Another recent report by Barker *et al.*[15] revealed considerable geogra-

[9] *Prevention of Coronary Heart Disease* (Royal College of Physicians, 1976).

[10] *Who Needs the Drug Companies?* (Haslemere Group, 1976).

[11] Brian Inglis, "Biofeedback", ENCOUNTER (November 1979).

[12] S. Greer *et al.*, "Psychological Response to Breast Cancer: Effect on Outcome", *The Lancet* (1979, No. 2, p.785).

[13] G. E. Vallant, "Natural History of Male Psychologic Health", *New England Journal of Medicine* (1979, No. 301, p.1249).

[14] J. R. Batchelor *et al.*, "On the Significance of the Association Between HLA and Multiple Sclerosis", *British Medical Bulletin* (1978, No. 34, p.279).

[15] D. J. P. Barker *et al.*, "Prevalence of Gallstones at Necropsy in Nine British Towns", *British Medical Journal* (1979, No. 2, p.1389).

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phical variations in the prevalence of gallstones in England and Wales. This has drawn attention to the enormous social, ethnic, and cultural differences that exist within the British Isles, and to the fact that only by studying diseases in relation to these factors can we understand many of our afflictions *whether or not* specific factors are involved. As Dr J. R. A. Mitchell observes,[16]

> "studies such as those by Dr Barker and his colleagues serve to remind us of the multifactorial nature of the majority of chronic con ditions, and of the folly of seeking to implicate single factors in isolation as 'the cause' of disease such as coronary heart disease and gallstones. Evidence is accumulating that one cannot even draw general conclusions from closely defined groups within a given local community."

Dr Mitchell's own work has shown striking differences in cardiovascular risk factors between the patients registered with three general practices in Nottingham.

TO HIGHLIGHT THE SHORTCOMINGS of specific aetiology is not to minimise the vast rewards that have been won by the practical application of this theory. But if we identify the seminal areas of contemporary medical science, it is clear that the landscape is changing. "Does appendicitis run in families? " is now a more worthwhile question to ask than "What is the cause of appendicitis? " In fact, recent evidence suggests that the condition *is* familial—information that could be of considerable importance in diagnosis.[17] Perhaps most significant of all, one of the most exciting areas of current research is concerned with hereditary predisposition to a wide range of diseases as influenced by the HLA antigens which form part of the cell's protein coat.[18]

First discovered because they influence the acceptance or rejection of tissue grafts (just as blood groups determine the type of blood that can be transfused from one person to another) HLA antigens occur on white blood cells and other tissues. They are known to be of considerable importance in relation to disease. Already, there is a long list of conditions known to be influenced by them, ranging from multiple sclerosis and rheumatoid arthritis to psoriasis and coeliac disease.

This takes us very close to the Hippocratic concept of disease, which focused on bodily constitution rather than on collisions between hapless victims and external, specific carriers of disease.

Away from the research laboratory, governments too are now realising that, in the privileged regions of the world with their diseases of stress and affluence and also in developing countries where living standards are mediocre, the most urgent and far-reaching choices in promoting health have little to do with scientific medicine.

The economic and political decisions to be made in the light of this realisation are immeasurably more demanding than those taken in a world where the role of the doctor is to administer specific nostrums and that of the politician is to provide him with the means to do so.

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[16] J. R. A. Mitchell, "The Geography of Disease", *British Medical Journal* (1980, No. 1, p.247).

[17] N. Anderson *et al.*, "Is Appendicitis Familial? ", *British Medical Journal* (1979, No. 2, p.697).

[18] W. F. Bodmer, "The HLA System and Disease", *Journal of the Royal College of Physicians* (1980, No. 14, p.43).

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# Ali Mazrui, A Prophet out of Africa

## *Broadcasting the Liberal Death-Wish—By PETER BAUER*

*"You taught me language; and my profit on't*
*Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you,*
*For learning me your language!"*
THE TEMPEST

LIBERALS, Malcolm Bradbury wrote in *Stepping Westward*, are people who embrace their destroyers. Professor Ali Mazrui's recent Reith Lectures [1] confirm this observation. Formerly at Makerere in Uganda, he is now Professor of Political Science at the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, a prominent liberal institution. As he recounts, when a youngster he was taken up and helped by Europeans in East Africa, and received his education in Western-organised and-financed institutions in East Africa, Britain and the USA. Yet hostility to the West pervades the lectures and provides their unifying theme.

His view of the recent past is this:

> "The Berlin Congress opened in 1884 to help seal the fate of the continent for at least another century. The nightmare of European penetration and colonisation of Africa was now truly underway. . . ."

His vision of the future:

> "The decline of Western civilisation might well be at hand. It is in the interest of humanity that such a decline should take place, allowing the different segments of the human race to enjoy a more equitable share not only of the resources of the planet but also of the capacity to control the march of history."

P. T. BAUER *is Professor of Economics (with special reference to economic development and underdeveloped countries) at the London School of Economics, Fellow of Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge, and Fellow of the British Academy. His works include "Dissent on Development" (1972) and "West African Trade" (1963), and, as co-author, "The Economics of Underdeveloped Countries" (1957). "The Achievement of P. T. Bauer", an article by the late Harry G. Johnson, appeared in the November 1972 issue of* ENCOUNTER.

These assessments explain his proposals for policy, which, as we shall see, are not designed to assist ordinary Africans but to diminish or undermine the West.

In each lecture Professor Mazrui addresses himself to what he considers a paradox. Africa, the first habitat of man, has decayed through human neglect; it is now the least habitable continent, because of disease, lack of communications, and political instability. Africans—though they have not experienced a holocaust, such as that experienced by the Jews, or genocide, such as that of the indigenous American Indians or Australians at the hands of Whites—have been the most humiliated people in history, through the slave trade, colonialism, and racial discrimination. In Africa, immense mineral wealth and agricultural potential coexist with extremely low living standards. Africa, the second largest continent, is the most fragmented, split into more than 50 nations, many of them tiny. Finally, Africa, a large continent centrally and strategically located in the world, plays only a marginal role in world affairs.

The causes of the predicament of humiliation, poverty and political impotence, and the possible remedies are Professor Mazrui's main concerns.

These lectures can be taken as just another attack on the West by a Western-supported Third World intellectual. But they are, I think, effectively designed to make the greatest impact on Western feelings of guilt.

Professor Mazrui writes well. He moves easily between vivid, pertinent episodes and wide-ranging political issues. He presents thought-provoking information on such various matters as the kaleidoscope of native religious beliefs and the political role of Westernised African intellectuals and soldiers. Referring to the brain drain from the Third World, Professor Mazrui rightly notes that this is the result partly of political persecution, but mainly of the wish of people to improve their economic position and to explore new vistas. He

[1] *The African Condition: The Reith Lectures*, By ALI MAZRUI. Heinemann Educational Books, £2.95.



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aptly compares the migration of African intellectuals to the West with that of African traders and workers between African countries for economic betterment. The merits of the book are, however, peripheral, and they do not affect the basic flaws of the argument.

The first doubt arises in the conventional effort to present Africa—and the Third World—as some sort of actual or potential unit. On his own count, there are in Africa some 850 distinct ethnic and linguistic groups. When talking about Africa, he sometimes means the whole African continent, including the Arab north; and at other times he means only sub-Saharan Africa. There is, of course, not even a semblance of unity or uniformity between North Africa and Black Africa. In historical times, their contact (apart from very limited trade) was that of intermittent conquest by North Africa of parts of Black Africa; their own history is marked by slave raiding and trading.

Is, then, the notion of a broadly uniform or united "Third World", making an amalgam of Asia, Africa and Latin America, embracing some two-thirds of mankind, anything more than a misleading ideological fiction? Its acceptance enables Professor Mazrui to by pass many difficult matters: e.g. the brutal persecution on ethnic and cultural grounds of large numbers of people in South East Asia, the Middle East, and Black Africa itself, often including officially organised and supported racial discrimination. But champions of the Third World, preoccupied with the denigration of the West, find it awkward to acknowledge these realities. A united Africa and a uniform Third World are concepts contrived for the special purposes of political and economic advantage. This endeavour is assisted by ignorance, guilt, and confusion in the West.

IN HISTORICAL TIMES the achievement of Black Africa, i.e. most of the Continent of Africa, has been negligible compared to that of Asia and Europe. This cannot, of course, in any way justify "enslavement" or "humiliation." But its recognition is indispensable for an understanding of the African predicament and for the assessment of Professor Mazrui's theses.

Nor does the fact that a million or so years ago an important stage in biological evolution may have taken place in Africa have anything to do with what has happened there in historical times. It may once have been the primal scene, but if the Garden of Eden has badly decayed, it is because its denizens have neglected it. Before the closing decades of the 19th century Professor Mazrui's erstwhile Eden was without the basic components either of civilised or of modern life. Before the arrival of Europeans in sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, all transport was by muscle, almost entirely human muscle, unaided by the wheel. There was no public security, man-made roads or ports, western-type science or technology. All this, and much else, came with the Europeans in the modern era. Except for the most cursory mention, unrelated to the central argument, Professor Mazrui does not discuss conditions in pre-colonial Africa, or in Liberia (which never was a colony) or in Ethiopia (independent for thousands of years, except for six years as an Italian colony).

Mazrui writes that, as a result of the Industrial Revolution, "... economic pre-eminence was bestowed upon the countries of Europe and North America." This ignores the personal attributes and motivations, the social and political conditions, and the many centuries of restless Western change and progress which were behind the Industrial Revolution. Disregard of the background of antecedent history, characteristic of so much contemporary political discussion, underlies Professor Mazrui's argument and vitiates it.

Why have the Africans not developed their mineral resources? Why did they have to wait for Europeans to explore, develop, process and market them? Contrary to what Professor Mazrui may want to believe, material backwardness amid ample natural resources is not anomalous, or paradoxical, or surprising. It is familiar both from history and from the contemporary world—witness the pre-Columbian Indians and the contemporary aborigines and pygmies, all extremely backward despite ample physical resources. Conversely, rapid advance and large-scale achievement of societies with negligible natural resources are also familiar, for instance Venice, the Low Countries, Germany, Britain, Japan (and, more recently, Hong Kong, Singapore, and Taiwan). The natural resources of advancing countries were developed by their peoples, as with the reclaiming of large parts of Holland and Flanders from the sea and everywhere the improvement of the land. Mazrui must learn to face it: African backwardness is only one conspicuous example of the fact that material progress depends on personal qualities, on social institutions and mores, and on political arrangements which make for endeavour and achievement, and not on mere "physical resources."

The paucity of effective resources and the resulting lack of achievement are crucial. What Shiva Naipaul reports in his *North of South: An African Journey* (1978) applies widely in contemporary Black Africa:

> "Expatriates staff the mines, the medical services, the factories, the technical colleges, the universities. Without them the country would fall apart. Zambia makes nothing; Zambia creates nothing. The expatriate lecturer in English waved apologetically at the handful of books, perhaps

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half a dozen on the library shelf. 'There,' he said, 'that's it. That's all the Zambian literature there is.' For him, the paucity is a source of genuine embarrassment. 'I would dearly love to teach something Zambian to my students. But what can I do if there's nothing. . . .' "

What literature there is is being undermined:

"The man who writes a book in Zambia—usually a simple tale of tribal life—is immediately whisked away into the higher reaches of the administration. One of the writers represented on the shelf had become a member of the Central Committee of the Party; another had been put in charge of a large state-owned organisation. . . . the fruits of high office dangling so alluringly before them."

Considerations such as these dispose of most of Professor Mazrui's paradoxes.

## *Oppression & Racism*

THE HUMILIATION and suffering of Africa through colonialism, slavery and racial discrimination are a major theme. Slavery did indeed inflict much suffering; colonial conquest was often attended by bloodshed; and many Africans have experienced galling racial discrimination. But Mazrui's discussion is nevertheless misleading.

Professor Mazrui writes of course at length about the Atlantic slave trade. He does not say that slavery was endemic in Africa and widespread in other continents before then, and that the supply of slaves for that trade was organised by Africans and Arabs (as the Europeans bought slaves principally at the ports). Nor does he tell his readers that slavery among Africans continued long after Western abolition. Most significant and revealing is, however, the absence of reference to the Arab slave trade. Ali Mazrui himself comes from Mombasa, a former Arab slave port. He surely knows that the Arab slave trade long preceded the Atlantic slave trade, far outlasted it, and was in fact suppressed only through Western endeavour. It was also, if such horrors are measurable, even more cruel because many young male slaves were castrated (a reason why in the Middle East there are not many more descendants of Negro slaves). In his masterly essay in *West African Explorers* (1951), Professor J. H. Plumb quoted Karl Barth's observation on this: "Allah had been kind if ten out of one hundred boys survived the operation." Yet do Arabs feel guilty—are their sensitised Westernised intellectuals helping to make them feel conscience-stricken about their role in the historic evil of the slave trade? Would mention of the Arab slave trade reflect on Third World solidarity?

Can it really be that Western capitalists ceased to support slavery only because wage labour became cheaper and more efficient? Why, then, did the abolitionist crusaders struggle so long to suppress slavery when it was so uneconomic, and therefore indeed doomed to disappear? Alas, the market in guilt appears to be cornered by the West. Like many Third World writers, Professor Mazrui endows the West with a complete monopoly both of historical injustice and of contemporary misconduct.

Can human extermination be yet another Western monopoly? Professor Mazrui cites the treatment of the Jews by the Germans and that of the American Indians and the Australian indigenes by the White settlers. He does not mention in this context the large-scale internecine massacres in Africa, including the early wars of the Zulus or the recent slaughter of the Ibo by the Hausa in Nigeria in the 1960s—instances rather more pertinent to Africa.[2]

It was under colonial rule that the rudiments of modern economic and social life, including public security, disease control and the suppression of slave raiding, were introduced into Black Africa; at the very least they enabled millions of Africans to live longer. Professor Mazrui interprets colonial experience entirely from the standpoint of the Westernised intellectuals. Many Westernised Africans (whose westernisation by definition came about through the European impact) may indeed have felt humiliated. How could they fail to be irked when under colonial rule they did not enjoy the status, power, and jobs which they, educated and articulate, felt were their due?

Under colonial rule (especially British colonial rule) there were relatively few jobs for them, partly because the government was alien, but also because government was so limited. What most ordinary people must have felt during the colonial period was that their persons and property were much safer than formerly, and that they were much less affected by disease. Obafemi Awolowo, a prominent Nigerian politician of the early post-war years, recognised this in his book *Path to Nigerian Freedom* (1947):

"Given a choice from among white officials, Chiefs and educated Nigerians, as the principal rulers of the country, the illiterate man, today, would exercise his preference for the three in the order in which they are named. He is convinced, and he has good reasons to be, that he can always get better treatment from the white man than he could hope to get from the Chiefs and the educated elements." [3]

[2] He does mention the genocidal wars between the Hutu and the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi. But even here he blames the Europeans—for not having incorporated these countries into Tanganyika after the First World War.

[3] Frederick Pedler, *Main Currents of West African History 1940–78* (1979).

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AMONG THE ECONOMIC ILL-EFFECTS of colonial rule, Professor Mazrui mentions (in a chapter entitled "The Burden of Underdevelopment") the production of cash export crops:

> "Important biases in the direction of development included, first, the export bias.... Cash crops for export were given priority against food for local people. One-quarter to one-third of the total cultivated areas in some of the more fertile colonies were devoted to the production of such export commodities as cocoa in Ghana, coffee in Uganda, groundnuts in Senegal and the Gambia...."

These crops have always been cultivated on their own properties by Africans. Cash crops sometimes replace food crops. But in Africa they are often added to food crops, as over much of Africa agricultural production is limited not by land but by labour, and farmers can and often do add cash crops to food (subsistence) crops. But whether they replaced food crops or were grown in addition to food crops, the cultivation of cash crops greatly raised African incomes.

Indeed, this was a prime instrument of material advance and helped to transform existence over large areas. Before 1886 there was not one cocoa tree in British West Africa. By the 1930s there were millions of acres under cocoa there, all owned and operated by Africans. Nor were the cash crops grown on fertile or often previously cultivated land; large tracts of jungle or semi-desert were turned into productive land. Professor Mazrui does not properly acknowledge the key role of cash crops in the progress of much of Black Africa, especially West Africa. Africans produce these crops for the same reason that I and Professor Mazrui, and our colleagues, teach at universities, instead of growing corn or planting potatoes. To condemn cash crops is to patronise the producers by saying that they do not know what is good for them, or that they ought not to have higher incomes.

Incidentally, Professor Mazrui fails to mention that in several African states official measures and policies have affected food production so adversely that the countries have become largely dependent on imported food. And it is not because domestic incomes have been diverted to more productive uses. Examples include Mozambique, Tanzania, and Zaire. As David Hopper (of the World Bank) writes of Tanzania:

> "The uprooting and resettlement of rural people, often far from their traditional lands, has caused farm production to drop to a point where the nation must import large quantities of food. In this case, the ideology of social reform has fully replaced any drive for economic growth. As long as food aid (or long-term loans for food purchases) is supplied to Tanzania by the industrial nations, the social experiment will continue...."[4]

Error and misconduct and social evils were not of exclusive European provenance. Professor Mazrui does not even mention the brutal Moslem conquest of the Sudan in the early 19th century (long before that imperial turning-point, the Congress of Berlin). This conquest was attended by massive and ruthless maltreatment of the Blacks in the Southern Sudan unparalleled in 19th-century European colonialism, and much of it continued into the 1970s. Nor does Professor Mazrui touch upon the oppression of the tribal groups, the great majority of the population, by the coastal Black rulers of Liberia, the lording of Amharics over the Galle in Ethiopia, or the many similar examples of internal tyranny by one African group or another. And, further, he fails to note the large numbers of Black Africans who have been forced to leave their countries.

IN THE DISCUSSION OF RACISM the Whites continue to function as the sole evil-doers. He makes a lot out of one unpleasant episode he has experienced in the United States. But the incomparable villains are, of course, the Whites of Southern Africa. I intend no defence of apartheid when I say that his treatment is altogether distorted. One can, if one wishes, speak of "the martyrdom of Sharpeville and the heroism of Soweto." But many observers have disputed whether the victims were martyrs to a cause, or part of a mob looting and burning mostly African properties, rather like the crowds in the Accra and Enugu riots of January 1948 and November 1949, in which also many were killed. What is not in doubt is that those killed in Sharpeville and Soweto together were a small fraction of the numbers of Ibo massacred in Northern Nigeria in 1966 well before the Biafra War; and a much smaller fraction still of the number of Africans killed in the 1960s and '70s in the struggles between rulers and ruled, in Rwanda and Burundi, in the Southern Sudan and in the Nigerian Civil War. The casualties in Sharpeville and Soweto together were in the hundreds; those killed in these other struggles numbered in the tens of thousands. It is ugly to count corpses, but ideology must not be allowed to make of death a double standard.

What of the living who are compelled to flee for their lives? Professor Mazrui speaks of the "vast numbers that have been running away either from racial discrimination or racial warfare in Zimbabwe, Namibia or South Africa...." However, he seems oblivious—to judge from his book—of the large numbers of Black Africans who have been

[4] W. David Hopper in T. W. Schultz (ed.), *Distortions of Agricultural Incentives* (Bloomington, 1978), p. 76.

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forced to leave their newly-independent African countries. Thus, in the three Guineas (Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, and Equatorial Guinea) high proportions of the population have been obliged to take refuge abroad. According to one account (Antony Delius, *Times Literary Supplement*, 18 February 1977) about one-quarter of the population of Sekou Touré's Guinea have fled the country and live as refugees in other African states. According to another (*The Times*, 3 November 1978), approximately one-third of the population of Equatorial Guinea "is in exile, usually in very

## Report from Home

*Kampala*

AT LEAST *36 Ugandans have been killed in the last few days in reprisal raids by Tanzanian security forces, angered at the death of two of their soldiers at the hands of civilians. The two Tanzanian attacks, in which villagers were mown down by automatic gunfire, came as concern mounted among Ugandan authorities that Tanzanian officers have no control over their men.*

**Ugandans are still suffering from shock, after an incident a week ago, when hundreds of Tanzanian soldiers stormed a village on the outskirts of the capital, Kampala, and fired from automatic rifles and machine guns for more than three hours. Houses were burned down and property looted in the raid which was a reprisal for the death of a Tanzanian in the village the night before.**

*President Godfrey Binaisa of Uganda has promised a judicial commission to investigate the incident but he may now be forced to include events over last weekend.*

**LAST FRIDAY NIGHT at least 30 Ugandans were shot dead in Katunguru village in the far west of the country, near the Zaire border. A group of European tourists who travelled through the village the day after the incident, reported that a large contingent of Tanzanian soldiers arrived to avenge the death of one of their men who was killed by villagers after he raped a woman.**

ON SUNDAY EVENING, *six Ugandans were shot dead in Banda village, about four miles from the capital, by Tanzanian soldiers avenging the death of a colleague in a motor accident in the area.*

**POLICE IN KAMPALA confirmed yesterday that the six villagers were shot by heavily-armed men in military uniforms, who arrived in a military bus. One villager reported that after the accident, Tanzanian soldiers threatened to destroy the village before March 29, when they are due to return home.**

*Half of the 20,000 Tanzanian soldiers in Uganda who have remained as a peacekeeping force since they overthrew the army of Idi Amin last April are expected to return to Tanzania by the end of March.*

*The remainder are expected to leave "within a few months" but, according to Western diplomats, may stay longer if elections take place this year.*

DAILY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

*Maputo*

MOZAMBIQUE'S *seemingly-dramatic change of course in its relationship with the West is being dictated more by economic necessity than by any abrogation of Marxist principles, according to analysts in Maputo.*

**Five years of revolutionary independence have failed to bring about economic recovery. The former Portuguese East African colony is close to economic collapse and is in desperate need of assistance.**

*Sanctions against neighbouring Rhodesia cost Mozambique more than £200 million and the effects of the Rhodesian war, from bombings and sabotage to hosting a large guerrilla army and 145,000 refugees, probably doubled that figure.*

**The Frelimo government has received large-scale technical and military assistance from the Soviet Union, Eastern European countries and, earlier, from Maoist China. But there is now an acceptance, albeit reluctant in the ruling party's Central Committee, that Western technology, enterprise and wealth is the only way Mozambique is going to achieve its development aims.**

IN PRESIDENT MACHET'S *fiery harangue to his nation last week, he lashed out at the "inefficiency, indiscipline, stupidity and anarchy" he had personally discovered in a lightning Presidential tour of many sectors of the economy.*

**Small industries and businesses originally nationalised by the State would be handed back to private enterprise because "they have served only to enrich dishonest State employees."**

DAILY TELEGRAPH (*London*)

*Ndjamena*

HEAVY ARTILLERY FIRE *was exchanged in Ndjamena, the capital of Chad today, with the most intense shelling coming from positions less than 200 yards from a ceasefire committee trying to hammer out a truce between rival factions.*

*Fighting resumed at dawn today, in the battle for this battered city which is without water or electricity.*

**The renewed civil war was the result of ancient endemic rivalries. Vice-President Kamaugue's army from the mainly Christian and animist South appeared to be trying to profit from the conflict to extend his faction's power.**

*Chad, one of the world's poorest countries, is short of everything except guns and armies. Since the sparsely populated nation gained independence from France in 1960, it has had only rare periods of peace.*

*There are 30,000 men under arms in Chad and 11 separate political groupings, which last November formed a transitional Government of national union that was supposed to bury past enmities.*

THE TIMES (*London*)

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difficult conditions." And many people fled from Guinea-Bissau after the post-Independence massacres.

On the other hand, until the outbreak of guerrilla warfare, the African refugees from the White-ruled areas of Southern Africa were confined to a small number of political activists. The numbers involved were a tiny fraction of those who were affected in the Guineas, and also of those who entered white-ruled Southern Africa from elsewhere in Black Africa, sometimes from as far away as Nigeria. Many more wished (and still wish) to come, stopped only by immigration restrictions introduced to prevent these countries from being flooded by these would-be entrants. They are obstructed also by various restrictions in Black Africa, designed to stop people from leaving for Southern Africa as this is politically embarrassing.[5] Africans migrate to Southern Africa or try to get there, because they earn more; their lives and property are much safer; and often the health and educational facilities are greatly superior to those of Black Africa. Until the outbreak of guerrilla warfare the number of these Black migrants into Rhodesia and South Africa exceeded that of the refugees by orders of magnitude, even disregarding would-be migrants.

If Professor Mazrui wants to refer to the position of the Blacks of South Africa as akin to slavery, he must grapple with the corollary: that it must be unique in history for large numbers of people from all over a huge area to wish to travel long distances in the face of formidable obstacles in order to become slaves.

Even among intellectuals the movement has not been one-way. Professor Mazrui mentions Ezekiel Mphahlele, a former South African political activist. "He lived and worked in Zambia, Nigeria, and Kenya. He left Africa somewhat disenchanted [and] decided it was time to go home—and suffer with the people. He had decided to come to terms with Africa's paradox of habitation. . . ." I wonder. May he not have returned because he found that, with all the humiliation of *apartheid*, South Africa was a better place for him than Zambia, Nigeria and Kenya, where he had previously worked? Noni Jabavu is a Black South African, author of *Drawn in Colour* (London, 1960), a sensitive and informative description of life in East Africa and Southern Africa, with a faithful account of the wrongs of apartheid, especially the petty humiliations. She had lived in East Africa, married to a prominent English liberal, and was a friend of Sir Andrew Cohen (whose guest she was when he was Governor of Uganda). She returned to live in South Africa, because life for a Black intellectual there was so much more varied, interesting and even safer than in East Africa.

According to African ideologues, White rule in Southern Africa is the overriding problem for Africa as a whole. Yet much less than one tenth of the population of Black Africa lives there; many other Blacks would like to go there; and the great majority of the rest are quite unconcerned with Southern Africa, which is indeed a far-away place about which most of them know nothing, often not even that it exists.

Even in the African states adjacent to Southern Africa people at large are quite unconcerned about white supremacy and liberation in South Africa. To quote Shiva Naipaul again:

> "Rhodesia and South Africa arouse more passion in the West than they do among citizenry of the black "front-line" states. The shelves of one Lusaka supermarket I went into were laden with South African merchandise—meat, toilet paper, detergents, tinned goods of all kinds. . . . As I strolled along the alleyways of the Lusaka supermarket, I reflected ruefully on the crises of conscience in the past by my consumption of South African oranges."

Are, as Professor Mazrui believes, ethnic, tribal and even family ties on their way out? (He regards preferential treatment even of one's close relatives as inappropriate and perhaps improper.) Perhaps he has not had the chance, between Makerere and Michigan, to ask some of the millions of Chinese in South-east Asia and the Indian refugees from Burma, Sri Lanka and of course East Africa, his home base, whether ethnic discrimination is disappearing. But here again Third World ideology is strictly selective: it is only discrimination by Whites which interests him.

WHAT PROFESSOR MAZRUI writes about the cultural and political scene of Black Africa is sometimes lively and informative. He describes the syncretistic attitudes and practices which incorporate Christian, Islamic, and more traditional elements (as, for instance, in the coexistence of polygamy and monogamy). He also rightly notes important inconsistencies in Western attitudes towards missionary activity. Western missionaries have promoted beliefs and conduct inconsistent with local tradition—but when people from the Third World propagate beliefs and conduct alien to Western mores, they may be ridiculed, persecuted,

[5] Such restrictions, so rarely mentioned in the Western press, have been enforced in some Black African states since the 1960s. On this subject, again, Shiva Naipaul is informative:

> "Many of the youthful unemployed and underemployed of Lusaka gaze with longing towards Rhodesia and South Africa. Several of those I spoke to said they would, if they could, go to these countries to seek work. Naturally, the Zambian government cannot allow that to happen. . . ."

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even subject to criminal charges. . . .

Professor Mazrui regards missionary activity as an example of Western penetration of Africa (and more generally of the Third World) which he deplores. He also repeatedly suggests that the Third World should despatch its own counter-missionaries to the West, where they might participate in civil wars—in Irish struggles and Quebec strife—all to help along the decline in the West's economic and political position. He thinks that the ultimate battles against racial injustice and oppression will be fought "in the streets of Birmingham, ghettos of Detroit, harbours of Marseilles and the motels of the rest of the Western world. . . ." These prospects lend particular interest to his proposal. He does not say who is to finance the proposed counter-missionaries from the Third World to the West—presumably the international agencies, or other organisations financed by the West.

PROFESSOR MAZRUI DESCRIBES vividly the role of the Westernised groups in African political life. His examples of the swings in political power between the intellectuals and the military are instructive and telling. But he ignores the two principal, and indeed decisive, factors behind the political prominence of Westernised Africans. One is the absence of a strongly entrenched local culture more resistant to Western impact, such as Hinduism or Islam. The second factor, politically crucial, was the increasing readiness of the Western powers in the 1940s and '50s to accept the articulate Westernised groups as the only authentic representatives of Africa. In British policy this was a complete reversal of the previous practice of trying to build on traditional and specifically local forms of authority in preparation for independence.

The most influential ideologies in the West since the 1930s consistently favoured the articulate Westernised and urbanised groups in Africa. They also favoured extensive economic controls. As a result, closely controlled economies were handed over to the incoming African governments in which these Westernised groups predominated. Since the Second World War these preferences have continued to shape the policies of the official international organisations and aid agencies. Unwilling and powerless populations have been placed at the mercy of unrepresentative rulers.

The promotion of state-controlled economies dominated by conspicuous but untypical groups transformed Westminster-style democracies, so widely publicised in the 1940s and '50s, into despotisms. Professor Mazrui rightly notes that they were in any case inappropriate to African conditions. But he does not seem to remember that the Westernised Africans had pressed for Western-type parliamentary systems of their own. They claimed that any other arrangements would have given power to reactionary elements, i.e. traditional authorities such as local chiefs and tribal councils. They claimed also that a denial of Western-style political arrangements to the incoming independent African governments would be manifest evidence of Western feelings of superiority.

The extensive economic controls promoted in the closing years of colonial rule (and subsequently also by various Western aid programmes) vastly increased the gains and losses in the harsh fight for political power. This result, in turn, has provoked conflict and has encouraged centrifugal forces, to suppress which required much coercion, often accompanied by large-scale civil war and bloodshed. Thus, Western policy since the Second World War not only hastened the collapse of "Westminster-style" government in Africa, but also ensured that it would be succeeded by kleptocracy, violence, and despotism.

Is not the prominence of the Westernised groups in Africa yet another regrettable example of Western influence? Mazrui nevertheless interprets African experience virtually wholly in terms of their concerns and interests.

Like many other Westernised Africans, notably including Kwame Nkrumah, Mazrui attributes the economic and political weakness of Africa largely to its division into 50 or more separate states; and again like others, including Nkrumah, he blames the West for this. This figure includes the North African countries, which have little in common with Black Africa (except for occasional concerted action against the West, especially under UN and UNCTAD auspices). But the multiplicity of Black African states is essentially the result of ethnic and tribal diversity, which in turn reflects the age-old isolation of small and warring communities, brought about by the absence of even rudimentary transport and public security. By providing transport facilities and security, Western activities have in fact broken down this isolation over large areas, and have thus helped to create larger communities.

The state-controlled economies of recent decades have worked in the opposite direction. By greatly increasing the prizes of political power, statism set up centrifugal forces in heterogeneous societies. At the same time it makes the rulers more reluctant to cooperate with one another, for such cooperation implies some central surrender of their local power over their subjects. Yet who but the articulate Westernised Africans have consistently pressed for Western help to establish and operate extensive state controls?

## *Politics & Poverty*

EAST AFRICA is where Professor Mazrui comes from, and where he taught for many years. Dr Julius Nyerere receives the usual uncritical admira-

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tion. He is, of course, referred to as a front-line President, although Tanzania has no common frontier with Zimbabwe but is separated from it by Zambia, Malawi, and Mozambique. He is described as "humane, sophisticated and sensitive to the wider implications of every act of policy"; and again, "Julius Nyerere does not believe in summary justice in his domestic policies. He is in reality a liberal democrat with a socialist veneer. . . ." Nyerere's régime has been extremely severe, not to say brutal. There have been numerous political killings. People have been incarcerated without trial for long periods in harsh conditions. Millions have been forced into so-called collectivised villages, often mere sites, far from their homes. Those who tried to resist have had their homesteads razed and were deprived of elementary comforts and civil rights.[6] Expropriations are frequent. But all this is forgiven by Mazrui, perhaps because Dr Nyerere is hostile to the West, to individual farming and private enterprise, and to personal freedom and property.

Professor Mazrui explicitly commends Dr Nyerere's foreign policy, which he interprets as an attempt to establish a Pax Tanzaniana, in turn a stepping stone to a Pax Africana. Components of the Pax Tanzaniana, noted on the whole approvingly by Professor Mazrui, have included the support of the bloody coup in Zanzibar with its attendant butcheries; assistance to the left-wing coup in the Seychelles; forcible closure of the border with Kenya, which inflicted much hardship on the local people, but which was apparently intended "to teach the government of Nairobi a lesson through economic means." What lesson? Perhaps to force the Kenyatta government to adopt internal policies similar to those of Dr Nyerere.

Establishment of the Pax Tanzaniana involved also the invasion of General Idi Amin's Uganda. Professor Mazrui thinks that the original purpose of this exercise was probably modest, no more than to teach yet another lesson, but that Dr Nyerere was drawn all the way by the lack of effective resistance. Nothing is said about the killing of civilians and the large-scale looting by the Tanzanian troops, long after the overthrow of Amin in April 1979—the Tanzanian army is still (May 1980) in Uganda. Meanwhile, back home, after many years of massive Western aid, living standards are even lower than in Amin's Uganda. Who knows?—the troops may not want to return, and perhaps Dr Nyerere may not even be eager to have them back after their experiences in Uganda. When in 1964 the Tanzanian army mutinied, Dr Nyerere had to appeal to London to protect him and suppress the revolt with a handful of British troops.

Mazrui does not need to be reminded that the establishment of a totalitarian régime in Uganda antedated Amin's rule. In 1966, shortly before the date of an election which he would have lost, Dr Milton Obote staged a violent coup, followed by civil war in which with Western support he overthrew the popular Kabaka. He promptly suppressed all political parties other than his own, and set up a tyrannical régime, which in turn was overthrown by Amin in a bloodless coup in 1971. According to the blurb of his book, Professor Mazrui was an important influence on the national politics of Uganda under President Obote.

ARE THERE PROSPECTS for non-Africans after the confidently expected overthrow of White rule in South Africa? Professor Mazrui thinks that in the long run there may well be much scope for them, although this is not certain.

> "At least in the urban areas Kenya has successfully maintained a multi-racial society. On the other hand, in Uganda Idi Amin ruthlessly threw out thousands of Asians. . . ."

Many thousands of Asians and Europeans, including groups who had been there for generations, have had to leave Kenya because, not being indigenous Africans, they were denied economic opportunities. Through the length and breadth of Black Africa, post-colonial governments have forced out Asians, Europeans, Levantines, and also Black African strangers, by refusing to renew employment permits or trading licences. Such policies deprive the local population of skills, consumer goods, and markets for their farm products.

HERE, THEN IS A VIEW of Africa which reflects contemporary ideology and intellectual fashion—hence its widespread appeal to listeners and readers.

In this scheme of things, economic achievement and change do not result from people's activities. They simply happen, as did for instance the Industrial Revolution. At times this leads to such bizarre statements of that Zaire "was among the very first African countries to discover uranium. . . ." What he really means is that Westerners discovered uranium there. Neglect of human achievement and of the personal qualities and the social and political circumstances behind it runs

[6] Reports on the enforced collectivisation in Tanzania include items in the *Washington Post*, 6 May 1975, 7 February 1977, *Financial Times*, 7 January 1975, *The Times*, 17 November 1975, and the *New Statesman*, 13 October 1978.

The report in the *Washington Post* put the numbers who had to leave their traditional villages at between six and eight million, and called it the largest migration in African history.

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through the lectures, from the decay of the Garden of Eden in the first lecture to Professor Mazrui's vision of the end of the 20th century in the last.

Professor Mazrui's "Burden of Underdevelopment" is in effect lack of economic achievement. But he refuses to acknowledge the role of the determinants of economic performance, harping instead on the poverty of Africa despite her rich natural resources.

> "The continent itself seems to be well endowed with resources, but a disproportionate number of people in the continent is undernourished and underprivileged. A situation where a continent is well endowed but the people are poor is a situation of anomalous underdevelopment."

It is, alas, not so anomalous as he thinks. Economic achievement depends on people and their arrangements, not on natural resources.

Professor Mazrui would like Africa to modernise—but without Westernisation. Is this possible? Is not the very concept of material progress, of steadily increasing control of man over his environment, as Western as the modes of conduct which derive from it? Progress and its conditions and manifestations may not be laudable or conducive to harmony or happiness, but the idea of Modernisation without Westernisation is simply self-contradictory.

The error is connected with the popular conception which regards income differences as a reflection of unjust privilege and exploitation. Poor individuals, groups, and societies are underprivileged and deprived. Like others who write in this vein, Mazrui fails to ask how external forces could possibly have caused the poverty of the poorest, most backward, groups in Africa (pygmies, aborigines, desert people) when these have had few outside contacts, and no commercial contacts with the West. In point of fact, throughout Africa (as elsewhere in the Third World) the level of economic achievement diminishes as we move away from the impact of Western commercial contact.

THE VIEW THAT poverty implies injustice and oppression suggests that poverty reflects misconduct by others. Thus if, say, Blacks in the West are relatively poor, this is evidence of such misconduct. This corollary lends special interest to the idea that the struggle for Black Liberation must extend beyond Southern Africa and into the West. Meanwhile, the most backward groups in Africa as elsewhere in the Third World seem to be doubly afflicted. They are extremely poor. They are isolated. There is no one from whom they could be liberated.

Professor Mazrui is persuaded that the size of a country, especially when allied to natural resources, should confer political power. He envisages that, by the end of the 20th century, because of their size and natural resources, Nigeria, liberated South Africa and Zaire will be the diplomatic leaders of Africa, and will also be prominent in world affairs. Size and natural resources are all. But in fact these confer neither riches nor political power, without appropriate human resources and the will to use them. Neither size nor natural resources conferred power on China or on India. Venice, Holland and Britain were world powers when they were still small and had few natural resources.

According to Professor Mazrui, worldwide exhaustion of natural resources and the population explosion are among the crises which endanger Africa, the Third World, and indeed the planet. (In accordance with fashionable jargon, he likes to refer to the world as "the planet", or "planet earth.") Here the West is again the root of all evil. "The Western world already consumes far too much of what there is on the planet, without planning for much more. . . ." Here again, he writes as if goods and services somehow just existed. He does not say that Western production not only pays for all of Western consumption, but in addition provides capital for the Third World. There is no danger from the exhaustion of physical resources. If one resource becomes relatively scarce, this leads to greater economy in its use, and to the development of substitutes. Moreover, with the exception of fossil fuel, all other mineral resources can be recovered as scrap. Should all natural resources threaten to give out, which is extremely improbable, Professor Mazrui can rest assured that human reproductive behaviour will be modified long before their exhaustion.

It is true that the West is responsible for the population explosion in the Third World. Before the impact of the West, high fertility in the Third World was balanced by correspondingly high mortality. Western science, technology and medicine, and Western-induced economic improvement, brought about the steep fall in mortality and the corresponding rise in life expectation. The population explosion reflects, therefore, a large improvement in conditions, because people (or almost all of them) like to live longer and see their children do so.

Mazrui presents a harrowing account of half-a-dozen children of one of his friends dying, which forces his friend to have a large number of children to replace those lost through early death. Here again the West is to blame because high child-mortality reflects Western-imposed economic injustice. But wasn't mortality, including specifically child mortality, far higher before the impact of the West? In recent decades it has in fact declined sharply, and this has indeed contributed to the so-called population explosion.

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DISCUSSING PORTUGUESE COLONIAL RULE and its aftermath, he holds that British colonial rule was less repressive and terminated sooner; therefore its successor states are less radically Marxist than are, say, Angola and Mozambique. But does not the more explicit Marxism of the governments of Angola and Mozambique owe much to such factors as the greater Soviet involvement there, and to the Cuban intervention in Angola? In any case, it is questionable whether Dr Nyerere's policies are less collectivist than President Machel's.

It is certainly rather eccentric to suggest that Dr Nyerere is some kind of a bourgeois liberal. Professor Mazrui also forgets that Kwame Nkrumah, the first President of the first successor state to British rule in Africa, was an avowed Marxist-Leninist. Nor does Professor Mazrui register that the present rulers of Ethiopia, who took over a traditionally independent state, are of extreme Left-wing persuasion, and pursue Communist policies as far as they can. But then Portuguese rule in Africa and Asia has always presented a special problem to official anti-racists. The Portuguese explicitly encouraged miscegenation and had hoped to create mini-Brazils, especially in Angola and Mozambique—which is hardly white racism.

## *Undermining the West*

RECEIVED THIRD WORLD ideology is based on the economics and politics of resentment. Mazrui's proposals are designed to erode the West and to undermine White influence, rather than to promote the welfare of ordinary Africans.

For the time being Professor Mazrui would welcome "some continuing extravagance in the Western world, but this is only a transitional strategy designed to weaken it sufficiently to make it responsive to the demands of global reform. . . ." He advocates more cartels of the OPEC type to exploit Western dependence on external sources of raw materials. However, as is widely and rightly recognised, the effectiveness of OPEC owes much to special conditions, which are certainly not present in the case of African primary products. Commodity cartels for other such products could not possibly be effective without Western support, including that of Western-financed official international organisations. Mazrui does not bother with such practicalities, nor with the major domestic problems of commodity schemes.

He takes continued foreign aid for granted, only suggesting that Third World countries diversify their sources of aid to make them more independent of particular Western donors. But how does persistent external help go with independence and self-reliance? Shouldn't proud and independent countries be urged to stand on their own feet? Here they are only being encouraged to help themselves to Western largesse, a practice which does not make for sustained prosperity.

Professor Mazrui proposes extensive replacement of Western imports and foreign personnel, technology and capital by local resources. Where are these to come from, and who is to pay? Ordinary people in the Third World would either have to pay more for locally produced supplies or go without the desired goods and services. But ideologists are rarely, if ever, concerned with the economic costs borne by ordinary people, or their needs, wants and preferences. He wishes to replace Western publications and films by local products because he sees cultural influence as a sinister form of imperialism. But their presence is not imperialism. It reflects the preferences of ordinary people, which everywhere are resented by the literati.

Professor Mazrui advocates what he calls horizontal interpenetration of the Third World. In plain English this means official restriction of commercial contacts with the West, thereby depriving people of what they want and can afford. Throughout the Third World, notably so in Africa, commercial contacts with the West have promoted material progress and the spread of new ideas and attitudes. Their forcible restriction can only result in obstructing economic advance, impoverishing societies and peoples, causing mass hardship. How can mutual trade among the poor promote prosperity? Will not such official restrictions place people even more at the mercy of the rulers than they already are?

The illusion of African or Third World unity is fiction. Neither the spirit nor the resources for concerted action are available without external help. Systematic replacement of Western commercial and cultural contacts by mutual trade and cultural collaboration presupposes external organisation and resources. The same applies to concerted political or military action. Black Africa, at any rate, still depends on transport and communication facilities supplied and maintained from abroad.

What is the point of complaining that African communications, including telephones, are oriented to the outside world? The reason for this must surely have occurred to him—namely, that they have been constructed by Westerners, and are used by them or by Westernised groups. Does Mazrui imagine that there was some external force which stopped Africans from developing such facilities? It remains easier to telephone from Kenya to the United States than to anywhere in West Africa, and even the most sympathetic press telex from Dar-es-Salaam to Lagos will go via—Belgrade.

GENUINE AFRICAN development will not be brought about by the ideological manifestos of

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innovators who care nothing for the traditions of good government and prospering economy.

Professor Mazrui's overriding preoccupation is with the undermining of the West, and with the enhancement of the real or illusory political power of the African rulers (and perhaps that of their advisers acting as new court theologians). The independent power of these rulers will depend on the readiness of the West to provide resources for the erosion of its own position and for the tightening of the grip of these rulers over their own subjects.

The direction of his argument is evident also in his proposals for a complete Western boycott of South Africa and for Western subsidies to guerrilla movements. He recognises that many people think that contacts with South Africa, especially inflow of capital, erode apartheid. An inflow of capital also tends to improve the lot of Africans by increasing the demand for labour and reducing the relative scarcity of capital, which is primarily a White asset.

Will the proposed boycott of South Africa extend to relations between that country and the Black African states? Even Mugabe's Zimbabwe has now re-emphasised the importance of the South African connection. Zambia depends heavily on South Africa for food and other consumer goods. Many thousands of people from Mozambique work in South Africa under a little-publicised agreement between the two governments. The South African Railways & Harbour Board is extensively involved in the administration of the Mozambique railway and the port of Maputo.[7] Professor Mazrui does not acquaint his readers with these realities.

It is a subject for reasonable argument whether apartheid would be eroded more effectively by the inflow of capital and the extension of commercial contacts, or by the menaces of a complete boycott of South Africa, if this were practicable. But Professor Mazrui obviously regards violent revolution as the real solution for South Africa. Unlike some more gradual process of reform and change, forcible overthrow of White rule necessarily involves riot, murder, and bloodshed. It is also much more likely to unleash tribal wars and massive maltreatment of Asians (in South Africa as in Central and East Africa, Africans at large dislike the Asians more than they do the Whites). This is another matter habitually swept under the carpet by exponents of Third World solidarity—and one about which Shiva Naipaul again writes candidly:

> "As is the case all over East and Central Africa, it is not the whites who arouse the greatest animosity, but the Asians. My stay coincided with a vigorous anti-Asian campaign in the Zambian press. Day after day, in the *Times* of Zambia, lengthy articles and impassioned letters to the Editor were devoted to this enthralling subject. Asian women were accused of harbouring feelings of superiority because they did not sleep with or marry Zambian men. Photographs were published showing suitcases filled to the brim with bank-notes seized from Asians attempting to smuggle currency out of the country. Asian businessmen, predictably enough, were guilty of monopolising the distributive trades and exploiting innocent Zambians. Could Asians, one letter writer wanted to know, ever become patriots? The climax came with the front-page headline which read: ASIAN DOCTORS KILL THEIR PATIENTS. . . . Hounding the Asian is a legitimate blood-sport; a national pastime. On another page of the same newspaper there was a photograph of Indira Gandhi, who, a day or two previously, had been in Lusaka preaching the gospel of Afro-Asian solidarity. Afro-Asian solidarity aside, a man from Mars would have had no trouble in deducing that Asians, not Rhodesians, not South Africans, were the overriding threat to the security and well-being of the Zambian State and Zambian people. . . ."

The fate of the Asians during and after a violent revolution in South Africa would not be enviable.

Writings such as Mazrui's play into the hands of determined supporters of apartheid within South Africa. Their propagandists can argue, this time with more evidence than usual, that their critics are ignorant or malicious.

THE AFRICAN SCENE does indeed present baffling anomalies. But these are very different from Professor Mazrui's pseudo-paradoxes, and are in fact their very antithesis.

How does it come about that African rulers whose military and economic resources are negligible are yet taken as seriously and exercise such influence as, say, Julius Nyerere or Kenneth Kaunda? What has led the West to abase itself before them—rulers whose democratic credentials are extremely meagre, and who could not survive without large-scale Western help? One factor is the widespread and much articulated feeling of guilt .

There are also many in the West who have come to dislike, and even to hate, their own society and its institutions, which they wish to undermine. Some look to Third World spokesmen and politicians as allies or instruments in the pursuit of a civil conflict. (Even the Barbarian invasions, as the Greek poet Cavafy once said, were "a kind of

[7] The economy of Mozambique would probably collapse if it did not allow South African technicians to operate its ports and railways and encourage substantial numbers of its citizens to work in the mines of the "enemy", Shiva Naipaul, *North of South*, p. 232.

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solution. . . .") Mere ignorance does not explain prevailing trends and attitudes: ignorance is neutral and does not account for a particular slant of opinion.

This background may explain the familiar adulation of Dr Nyerere, or kudos for Shridath Ramphal as "the man who saved Rhodesia", or commendations of Kaunda's meaningless vapourings about African humanism (as evanescent as yesterday's talk about Nkrumah's "African personality"), or indeed references to Professor Mazrui as a formidable mind and a mentor for our times. There are many thousands of people in the West who have heard of Professor Mazrui for every one who has heard of Noni Jabavu, whose *Drawn in Colour* says far more about Africa.

*The African Condition* is published by Heinemann Educational Books. I first met this imprint when reading *Africa Must Unite*, a collection of Nkrumah's rantings. Professor Mazrui is more sophisticated than Nkrumah, but his lectures are of no greater intellectual substance. The book confirms again that the world language of the late 20th century is not English. It is Newspeak.

## Girl Dressing Herself

She is putting on her underwear, squatting on
a low stool. Knees raised, the skirt uncovers her thigh,
slackening about her rump. She lets out a sigh—
moving shadows provide a moment's distraction—
and stops, gripping the item tightly in her hand,
concentrating on a patch of sunlight beyond,

then looks away, resumes her task, stands up, and
the skirt falls crisply enough to its measured length.
Now she has things to do and has the fresh day's strength
in front of her. She hears the sparrows chirruping
and returns the stool to its usual habitat
beside the mirror, goes out. The front door clicks shut.

The stool does not retain the imprint of her sitting;
the high gloss cools, regains its brilliant colour
in swelling light; walls proceed to lose the pallor
and ambiguity of dawn; the room is heating
to a mid-morning equilibrium, a bright
clarity of statement, positively forthright,

and holds there, perfect and poised as the minutes pass.
A spider crawls over the mirror, a fly blunders
into the pane, draughts rise in the door and creep under,
stirring the thin Indian bed-cover. Through the glass
rustling of leaves, hazardry of traffic, voices,
stiffening of light on shadow-blackened faces.

Then afternoon, quieter than before; the dresser
begins to lose definition, its dust becomes
invisible as light withdraws; a few stale crumbs
are swallowed in the carpet; you'd have to guess the
pattern of the cushion on the little chair
by the far wall. Patches are scattered here and there.

Room and girl, fellow conspirators, wait for each other
at both ends of day, their patience is unlimited.
I try to carve them from imagination; the bed,
the stool, the skirt, the light; trusting to the weather
of their eternal and impenetrable country
of which I too am a citizen, or will grow to be.

*George Szirtes*

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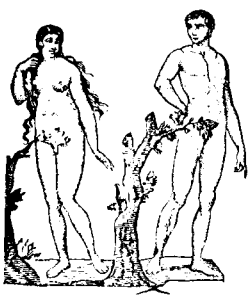
# AUTHORS & CRITICS

## *"Lucky Jim" & After*

# The Business of University Novels

### *By J. P. Kenyon*



GEORGE WATSON ("Fictions of Academe", ENCOUNTER, November 1978) points to a notable post-War literary phenomenon, not always treated with the seriousness it deserves: the rise of the University Novel.

Watson is more concerned with the negative aspects of the genre, but there is still ample room in 1980, it seems, for the nostalgic, best-years-of-our-lives treatment, typified by J. I. M. Stewart in the "Patullo Quintet", sired on *Gaudy Night* by *Sinister Street*. Stewart makes some concessions to modern trends, and he has clearly read and absorbed Philip Larkin's *Jill* (1946); but he is still mesmerised by the solid, timeless comfort, the faded chic, the phoney grandeur of Oxford academic life. He is much too willing to excuse the excesses of the odious Mumfords (grandfather, father, and son) and even his specimen "modern" undergraduate, Nicholas Judkins (significant name) has a distinctly Edwardian flavour.

C. P. Snow is nothing if not up-to-date, but in his Cambridge sequence, *The Light and the Dark* (1947), *The Masters* (1951) and *The Affair* (1960), he shows the same lotus-eating satisfaction as Stewart with the minutiae of the don's life: the hot muffins under silver covers, candlelight reflected in wood panelling, cosy bottles of claret behind sported oaks. Here Sir Lewis Eliot in old age returns to Christ's for dinner one summer night:

> "Lights were shining, young men's voices resounded: the smell of wisteria was faint on the cool air: it brought back, not a sharp memory, but a sense that there was something I knew but had (like a name on the tip of the tongue) temporarily forgotten. . . ."

Eliot himself, a detached, rather ineffectual observer, plagued by incomprehensible neuroses and uncharmingly self-obsessed, is second cousin to Stewart's Duncan Patullo.

In fact, "young men" are conspicuous by their absence from C. P. Snow's novels, until in *The Sleep of Reason* he turns back to the civic university in his home town—and then its students are stylised to the point of caricature. His Cambridge combination rooms, in fact, are a back projection of the real corridors of power, in London.

SIMON RAVEN'S CAMBRIDGE has attracted less scholarly interest than Snow's, but it is certainly much jollier, even if his dons are afflicted by every perversion known to psychotherapy, and many not. *Doctors Wear Scarlet* (1966) is arguably a Gothic pastiche, but *Places Where They Sing* (1970), written in the aftermath of the student troubles of 1968, presents a Cambridge at least remotely recognisable to those who have lived and worked there; and to my mind Hugh Balliston is one of the few credible students or undergraduates in the whole genre, apart from Larkin's John Kemp. He is even seen doing some work, something surely unique. In one memorable scene he turfs his delectable girl friend out of bed in order to get on with his essay:

> "Hugh quivered with tenderness, gurgled slightly, and then turned back with a shrug to the papers on his desk. 'Go along, bottykins', he said softly, 'Come tomorrow at twelve'. . . ."

Sad to say, when he presented the essay that evening, his tutor "screwed it into a ball, and tossed it through an open door into his bedroom." But the dons of Lancaster College are rather like that.

A RECENT Cambridge novel, Tom Sharpe's *Porterhouse Blue* (1974), is pure fantasy, of course, but the absence of students is still significant—apart from the unfortunate research student Zipser, of course, who is immolated together with his lascivious bedmaker in the explosion of a gross of gas-filled condoms. And when we turn to the Redbrick (or precast concrete) university novel, which has now taken a commanding lead, the suppression of the student is almost absolute. Malcolm Brad-

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bury manages a few thumb-nail sketches in *Eating People Is Wrong* (1959), not surprisingly, since he was a student himself when he wrote it; but the book's "hero", Louis Bates, is a sad, self-destructive, hopelessly unattractive figure, with his blackheads, his reeking feet and gargoyle face. (Emma Fielding is only technically a student—yet another research student, though as usual her precise field of research is not explained—and as a full-grown woman she is associated in the reader's mind with her rival, Dr Viola Masefield.) In *The History Man* (1975), writing years later as a professor, Bradbury succumbs to a black disgust with students and with universities. Here we stand alongside Howard Kirk, high in the Social Sciences tower, as he watches his students filing on to the Watermouth campus at the beginning of a new session:

> "No longer do they look like an intellectual élite; indeed, what they resemble this autumn is rather the winter retreat of Napoleon's army from Moscow. For in the new parade of styles, which undergoes subtle shifts year by year, like the campus itself, bits of military uniform, bedraggled scraps of garments, fur hats and forage caps and kepis, tank tops and denims and coats which have lost their buttons have become the norm; the crowds troop along raggedly, avoiding the paths which have been laid out for them, hairy human bundles fresh from some sinister experience. . . ."

The whole paragraph is a remarkable attack on university life in the 1970s; there is no pity in it, no charity, no hint of tenderness.

Nor is this necessarily a post-1968 attitude. The anonymous university college in *Lucky Jim* (1954)—the novel that started it all—is scarcely distinguished for high living or sound learning; and the student body, it seems, is mainly composed of silly giggling girls and suave slightly bogus ex-servicemen like Mr Michie, with his barathea trousers and public-school manners, whom the unfortunate Jim Dixon finds it so difficult to cope with. In Kingsley Amis's recent novel, *Jake's Thing* (1978), only one student makes an appearance, and Jake Richardson silently apostrophises her thus:

> "One, see if you can't work out some way of getting yourself just a bit ashamed and scared of not wanting to know anything about anything or to be good at anything. Two, if that fails, at least try to spell a bit and write legibly and write a sentence now and then—you can forget, or go on never having heard, about punctuation. Three, when you see a word you recognise in a question, like Greece or Tyre or Malta, fight against trying to put down everything remotely connected with it that you may have—oh stuff it. And four, go away and leave your place at St Hugh's to someone who might conceivably—oh stuff it. . . ."

BUT, OF COURSE, it is the dons, the unfortunate lecturers and professors, who really come under the hammer in this kind of novel. Jim Dixon, the "hero" of *Lucky Jim*—and it is noticeable that all the heroes of these novels have to be qualified by inverted commas—is an abject failure in his job, and, up to the last reel, in his personal relations. His professional failure is only disguised by the fact that his colleagues are all incompetent has-beens, led by that classic professorial figure Stephen Welch, too true to type to be funny; his personal failure is only redeemed by a *coup de théâtre* which throws him, not very credibly, into the arms of Christine Callaghan (and her millionaire uncle) in the last chapter. Across the years I now feel a belated sympathy for Somerset Maugham, who at the time solemnly denounced Dixon and his friends and was himself equally solemnly denounced by our literary cognoscenti, led by C. P. Snow.

> "They do not go to the university to acquire culture [said Maugham] but to get a job, and when they have got one, scamp it. They have no manners, and are woefully unable to deal with any social predicament. Their idea of a celebration is to go to a public house and drink six beers. They are mean, malicious and envious. . . . Charity, kindliness, generosity, are qualities they hold in contempt."

As for Jake Richardson, sympathy is not even solicited for him, as it was I think for Jim Dixon, nor is his negligence offset by any obvious incompetence on his colleagues' part. His perfunctory performance of his academic duties is matched by a rather perverse sexual impotence, which is something rather different from George Watson's "established fictional convention that professors are better at footnotes than in bed." To Simon Raven, in *Doctors Wear Scarlet*, Richard Fountain's impotence is just one symptom of a complete psychic breakdown. It reappears more naturally, even conventionally, in the case of Tom Llewellyn in *Places Where They Sing*, though it must be admitted that none of the fellows of Lancaster College seem to be "potent" in any recognised way.

THE SAME TREND is evident in Malcolm Bradbury's work. Professor Stuart Treece, in *Eating People Is Wrong*, is ill-adjusted and self-doubting, and quite unable to handle even the most elementary social situations. We are left to assume that he is not very competent as a teacher or writer,

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either, though this is not stressed. However, he is a figure with whom it is difficult not to sympathise. Very different indeed is "The History Man", Howard Kirk, a flashy intellectual scoundrel who is so dishonest that he cannot even recognise honesty when he sees it, whose wife commits suicide on the last page apparently for the sole reason—and not an implausible one—that she cannot put up with him any longer. *Stepping Westward* (1965), though milder in tone, and set in America, still portrays a profession riddled with hypocrisy, cant, and sheer dishonesty. David Lodge's *Changing Places* (1975), a buffoonish version of Bradbury's classic, carries the same message.[1]

BUT IT IS TIME we stood back and asked ourselves the obvious question: Why do all these novelists, most of them with direct experience of University life from below and above, pillory the English universities in this way? And why does the reading public revel in it?

J. I. M. Stewart's Oxford and C. P. Snow's Cambridge are, I suppose, moderately attractive, though to me they smell too much of the antimacassar; but Kingsley Amis's and Malcolm Bradbury's universities, or for that matter Sharpe's and Raven's Cambridges, are so relentlessly unattractive, so intellectually null, that surely any sane person would reject them out of hand. Yet most of these novels have sold well, some of them spectacularly so. They are all in paperback; *Lucky Jim* has never been out of print; and *The History Man* was the cult novel of 1975. It is reasonable to suppose that their readership is mainly drawn from the hundreds and thousands of men and women who have graduated from our universities since 1945; in fact, much of the background detail would be incomprehensible to those who had not. Yet they are prepared to accept a profoundly unsympathetic picture of universities and their students, though they were so recently in this category themselves and devoted three precious years of their young lives to it. Most of them, too, are anxious that their children should enjoy the same "privilege."

For I do not accept George Watson's argument that the demand for university education has fallen off dramatically or significantly. It is falling relative to the number of places available; but the number of such places has steadily increased since 1965. A few intelligent and capable teenagers reject university education consciously and honestly (as a similar proportion always did); but the great majority of those who adopt this attitude do so because they know that, educated in our declining state schools, they are simply not equipped for it. In the meanwhile the McNair Report has recommended (and the Law Society has agreed) that all future lawyers should hold a degree; and it is the eventual aim to make school-teaching an all-graduate profession, albeit through the dubious mechanism of the B.Ed. Not surprisingly, the educated middle class continues to put enormous pressure on its offspring, usually with success, to proceed to university at eighteen almost as a matter of course. George Watson's "unspoken premise that any intelligent person would go to a university if he had the choice" is very far from out-of-date. (In my personal experience it is no longer unspoken.)

I DOUBT, IN FACT, IF University Novels are regarded by those who read them as especially relevant to "real" universities. Firstly, the profound cynicism and disgust displayed by their authors is dismissed as a quirk of the cloistered academic. No layman regards a professor as being quite of this world.[2]

Secondly, the pharisaic attitude is very strong—"I thank thee, Lord, that mine own university is not as one of these", or, of course, "mine own college" in the case of Oxford or Cambridge. Given our capacity for self-deception, this is probably the strongest neutralising agent.

Next, I think Watson dismisses too cavalierly the lady who remarked that universities are "the only communities left in the modern world." The theme of a closed community, outside the mainstream of modern life, has always had obvious attractions. It explains the appeal of much science fiction, which is concerned with closed communities, whether on a space ship or on an alien planet.

But I also suspect that the University Novel fills a gap left by the absence of anything like a "Business Novel" in English. I suppose a majority of the middle class is engaged in business or administration of one kind or another; yet it is remarkable how few modern novels reflect their daily life in any convincing way. If we ignore, as I think we must, the American "Tycoon" novel, which is unreal even to Americans, then we can only fall back on Roy Fuller's *Image of a Society*, or perhaps Edgar Mittelholzer's *A Morning at the Office*, both of them set in a highly specialised

[1] Incidentally, I cannot follow those who assume that *The History Man* is an attack on sociology. Howard Kirk's academic discipline is surely chosen at random, probably to avoid offending Bradbury's nearer colleagues in the humanities. Nor can I understand those who are aggrieved because they don't find it funny. Bradbury can be ruthlessly witty, as in his classic exposé of a Social Sciences Faculty meeting, but he is emphatically in the business of tragedy, or at best black comedy.

[2] In fact Kingsley Amis and Malcolm Bradbury reflect a deeply worrying tendency on the part of those who teach in universities to reject them *in toto*. Nor is this reaction confined to universities, if Tom Sharpe's ineffable "Fenland College of Arts and Technology" is any guide. But naturally this need not trouble those who have shared in higher education only as "consumers."

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environment. Yet if you substitute for "professor" the term "managing director", or for "College Council" or "Faculty Board" the term "Board of Directors , you realise that many University Novels are in fact "business-like", in a literal sense. What, after all, is *The Masters* about? Surely the intrigue to replace the dying head of an Organisation, which could just as well be a Company as a College. *The Affair* deals with the common case of a junior executive unfairly dismissed. One of the many intertwined plots in *The Sleep of Reason* describes how a Board chairman (Vice-Chancellor) loses the confidence of his key Directors (senior Professors).

IT IS EASY TO SAY that these novels deal in general terms with human nature, human greed, human failure. True, but they are unusual in that they portray human relationships which are also power relationships, and they are set in status-competitive situations which are equally important in business as in higher education—probably more so. The man's job is not just a background to the action, it is the action. The signal weakens slightly when we move away from C. P. Snow; but even then, *Lucky Jim* is really all about an unhappy junior executive striving to turn his post into a permanency, *Eating People Is Wrong* is an essay in directorial failure, and in *The History Man* a middle manager sets out to sabotage the whole firm. The meeting of the governing body of Lancaster College, which is recounted in some detail in *Places Where They Sing,* could be transposed into a Board meeting with very little change.

WHY IS this so? The fact is, a high proportion of senior academics are much more interested in what they call "politics" (when they mean "business") than they are in their teaching or research. After all, as long ago as 1908 F. M. Cornford recognised the "Good Business Man" as a common Cambridge type. They spend much of their time bullying or cajoling their colleagues into doing things their way; and they delight in pushing their chosen measures through an increasingly intractable consultative and administrative machinery. They are also by nature voluble creatures, in speech and writing, who find it easy and agreeable to recount their experiences in an entertaining form. Thus the "University Novel."

I agree with George Watson that we have had too much of a good thing, but, as I have suggested, it fills a remarkable gap. What we need now are good "Business Novels."

## Wrestling with the Angel

All night there was fighting. The moon fought.
The air fought the clouds, stripped, tugged, tore.
The stream's incessant squabble filled the dark.
None of the creatures slept. Then towards morning
It took the form of men, of two men wrestling
In savage silence, huge against the moon:
The damp crunch of the sand, the creak of muscles,
Until one said, "Let go now, day is coming."
The other wouldn't. "Bless me first", he said;
And they fought on, locked in their quiet tumult.
"Tell me your name", one said. "My name is Jacob:
I will not let you go until you bless me.
And tell me yours." Darkness drained from the air;
Their breathing tore the wind; the water shivered.
He blessed him saying, "Why do you ask my name?
You are not dead. Be satisfied with that."

The sun rose. The river's agitation
Grew petty in the daylight. On to the bank
A wet and limping figure groped his way.
The wind had dropped. There was his brother waiting,
The once familiar fields, his father's grave,
His flocks, his slaves, all waiting. He looked round.
There were his wives, and his enormous future.

*Laurence Lerner*

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# POINTS OF THE COMPASS

*Letter from Ankara*

# Turkey, Ear-Ache of the West

*By Kai Krueger*

SINCE the Americans were expelled from Iran, the nearest Western radar listening-posts to Soviet rocket bases are those in Turkey. But economic chaos, corruption, and terror are driving Turkey, the only NATO country with a Moslem population, to the brink of civil war. Many people already fear "a Turkish Khomeini." Now the West wants to save what can be saved. Spearheaded by the West German Federal Republic, the rich industrial nations want to reorganise the ruined country and bind it to themselves. But is their aid too late? Will Turkey form an alliance with Iran and "float clear of East and West"?

The bad news is piling up. In the east of Anatolia there are 30–40 degrees of frost. For four days the Orient Express, on its way to Ankara, has not been able to move because of frozen fuel. The passengers of a cross-country bus that got stuck near Tunceli wandered through the snow for three days.

Turkey was locked in its coldest winter for 30 years; and all this without oil and coal to provide heating. Since last autumn the stoves have been cold almost everywhere. Only the Kurds still have something to burn—dried sheep-dung, which they have been using for a thousand years.

Turkey is bankrupt and can't even pay its last foreign exchange bill, the one for oil. Every morning it is the same: the country has hardly struggled to its feet when all the lights go out; from half-past eight to half-past twelve all the power stations are switched off. Oil is used for transport, and that's all. They can still get along without electric light. There are enough candles for the time being. But the black-outs have special effects. In Hacettepe, Ankara's University clinic, and one of the best hospitals in the Middle East, operations are now performed only in the afternoon. People get stuck in lifts. There is no water to flush the toilets, and those who still have enough oil to heat their houses have no power to run the electric pumps; so the house remains cold despite the oil.

Not only the crippling frost made it a hard winter. Half the working population—around fifteen million—is unemployed; another half-million will be added to that figure this year; and there are no unemployment benefits. To crown it all, prices recently rose 100% almost overnight. The West forced the Turkish minority government of the conservative Süleyman Demirel to devalue the lira by 50%.

This was the first condition for full payment of those loans totalling some 2.7 thousand million dollars which the West allocated to Turkey last year. The second condition was the cancellation of subsidies to the government-owned concerns which supply the country with steel, cement, coal, and also with meat, flour, and spirits. Everything became twice as expensive.

Private industry immediately followed suit. It is, in any case, suffering most from the energy shortage: three-quarters of the factories lie idle. Entire work-forces are being given their holidays now instead of in the summer, for weeks at a time on full pay; and any employers who can't sweat it out go to the wall.

The effect on the Armed Forces is even worse. The Turks have almost 700,000 well-drilled soldiers under arms. Yet the largest European NATO army has got fuel for only 12 days (the NATO average is 30 days). In an emergency the tanks would soon run out of petrol at the very point where NATO borders directly on the USSR for 600 kilometres. In the current centre of world crisis, the Middle East, the Western defensive alliance is relying on a "paper tiger." And since the Russians marched into Afghanistan, Western strategists regard Turkey as more endangered than ever before: they fear that a situation might also arise here in which the Soviets are called on for "assistance."

THE RUSSIANS have waged six wars against the Turks in the last 300 years, solely over the right to use Turkish waterways between the Black Sea and the Mediterranean. And now there is the matter of the listening-posts. Since the Americans had to leave Iran, the 17 US radar screens in Turkey are now the nearest to the Soviet rocket bases behind the Caucasus. The antennae of Pirinclik near the Turkish Kurdish capital Diyarbakir are, for



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example, the most powerful on this side of the Atlantic.

But the Iranians have also cast an eye on Turkey. Teheran has recognised that the industries of its western neighbour could be adapted very neatly to its own plans. Iran's President Bani-Sadr evidently told the Turks: "You have the factories, we have the oil. Let's present a common front against the super-powers! . . ." As a first step Khomeini's pro-consul proposes transferring all of Iran's foreign accounts to Turkey: "Your banks must become free of the West."

This same West has now specially chosen the Federal Republic of Germany to cure ailing Turkey, in order to preserve it as a market and as a pillar of NATO. The industrial nations have no other allies—apart from General Zia's military dictatorship in Pakistan—capable of confronting the Russians in the Middle East.

Can the manoeuvre succeed, with Turkey on the brink of civil war? More and more Turks want to solve the problems of their country with force and violence. The Turkish Constitutional Office recently counted no less than 47 Left- and Right-wing terrorist organisations. But I note that the "Grey Wolves" of Alparslan Turk (an admirer of Hitler) and the no less militant "Strikers" of Necmettin Erbakan (an admirer of Khomeini) are not even included on this list.

Almost 3,000 people have fallen victim to Turkish terrorists in the last two years. If the public prosecutors have their way, they will shortly be joined by another 338 all in one go—the number of death penalties which the prosecution demands in the trial concerning the Christmas massacre of 1978 in the southern Turkish town of Kahramanmaras. Provoked by Right-wing extremists, some 111 people shot and stabbed one another in the streets of the town inside three days—mass murder as a product of Turkish despair.

Meanwhile wage disputes are being settled by violence. The Public Prosecutor wants to put Kemal Nebioglu of the pro-Socialist "Progressive Trade Union Federation of Turkey" behind bars for seven-and-a-half years. His militant organisation, which with over 500,000 members is almost as large as the conservative Trade Union Federation of Turkey, has once again called for a general strike; this time in protest against the trend of prices. And it has fuelled so much dissent with its wage demands in Izmir that 10,000 soldiers have been posted there.

Let me add this. The shops in Turkey are full of basic foodstuffs. The country is even able to export wheat, mutton, fruit and vegetables. But last summer the first tractors were coming to a standstill in the fields for lack of fuel. Once the lorries which transport the food in this big country (over twice as large as Great Britain) run out of fuel, once the ovens of the bakeries stay cold, and hunger arrives to join the frost, there may well be some kind of revolution in Turkey. But not an Islamic revolution. Since Kemal Ataturk, the still revered "Father of Turkey", put an end to the temporal and spiritual power of the Sultan a good 50 years ago, Islam in Turkey is no longer a political force. The Islamite "Party of Salvation" occupies a total of 23 of the 450 parliamentary seats. A revolution from the Left or from the Right in Turkey would be a very secular one—and in its very first hours it would call on the Army, the only real power, the only functioning organisation in the country.

The generals have already fired a warning shot. They wrote to the warring political leaders—to President Demirel and the Social Democrat Bülent Ecevit—urging them to rally to a Grand Coalition and combine forces to maintain order. Premier Demirel replied: "It's hard enough to govern on our own. . . ."

SÜLEYMAN DEMIREL, an oriental businessman through and through, prefers to rely on his own kind, on private contractors, and wants to put the political economy largely into private ownership and attract foreign capital to the country again, in order to create new jobs and give people some money in their pockets. Since he first came to power 15 years ago, Demirel has backed the West. But the Western economists treated Turkey no differently from other "exotic" markets: the yardstick of a good deal was their own economic interests and not the internal stability of their trading partner. So for decades firms from the West have been selling off to Turkish businessmen the worn-out factory equipment which primarily processes raw and semi-manufactured goods from abroad for the Turkish market.

A country which regularly imports raw and semi-manufactured goods must also pay for them regularly—in hard foreign currency. And in the long term it can earn that only through its own exports. But nobody cared about that: not the Turks, who lack the aggressive export mentality of the Germans or the Japanese, and certainly not the West. It wanted a new customer, not a new competitor.

At first agricultural exports, tourists, and foreign workers stopped the currency gap. After that debts were run up, and paid off by new debts until the interest was sky-high; then increasing oil prices rounded off the crisis. The country's foreign earnings were no longer sufficient to give investors a return of interest and profit in hard currency, and foreigners dropped a once-promising market like a hot potato. No more money for a bad customer, and very few goods. Western money and Western goods are now only to be found in the Bosphorus by those who possess a certain amount of oriental

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cunning, for Turkey has become a market of swindlers and gangsters.

ONE NOTORIOUS SWINDLE was the so-called Hermes trick. A Turkish firm ordered a batch of tools on credit from West Germany, which is by far Turkey's largest trading partner. Before the German firm's exporter made the delivery, he took out credit assurance to cover him if the customer didn't pay. (The Ministry of Commerce in Bonn has been granting these assurances to exporters for some time.) The Hermes *Kredit-Versicherung* of Hamburg was appointed in trust as a middle-man. The exporter and his Turkish client knew perfectly well when they closed the deal that no money would come out of a Turkey devoid of foreign currency by any legal means and that Hermes would have to pay 90% of the sum stipulated in the agreement. So right from the start they raised the purchase price to include not only the premium for Hermes Assurance, but also their own 10% share and interest on the one-year waiting period until Hermes "adjusted" the damages. The supplier didn't lose a penny. Frequently the business partners would agree on a further increase of 10 or 20%. After payment by Hermes this was available to the Turk as a small *bakshish* tax-free, in hard German marks.

Until Hermes and the Minister for Economic Affairs finally realised that no more money was coming out of Turkey, Bonn had to write-off "several hundred million marks" in losses of this kind. A further 2,000 million marks of insured trade with Turkey are still outstanding—at the expense of the German taxpayer. Gehring, Hermes' solicitor in Bonn, declared: "But we gave them a guarantee. Just imagine, many firms made deliveries without any insurance. Now they're furious, and out in the cold. . . ."

Bonn has not insured any business with Turkey for over a year. Respectable Turkish businessmen now have to procure the foreign currency to pay for imports at the *tahtakali*, the black market in Istanbul, which has long been regarded as the real central bank of Turkey. At any rate, last year it put foreign currency to the equivalent of three thousand million marks at the disposal of the Turkish economy (though at rather excessive rates of exchange).

The *tahtakali* deals principally in the money of foreign workers. Almost every Turkish "commercial firm" in Frankfurt, for example, gives a Turk more lira for his marks than does a bank. The Frankfurt firm pays the lira directly to the foreign worker's family in Turkey through its partners at the *tahtakali*. The marks remain in Germany and are used for black-market deals in the opposite direction, on instructions from the *tahtakali*. Perhaps they go to pay the bill of a German supplier, or as a profit transfer from a German branch in Turkey to the parent bank. The process is, I am assured, just as reliable as with any respectable bank.

Black-market sales, naturally, bypass the Turkish Exchequer. Workers and employees, who still pay taxes in Turkey, suddenly find themselves, thanks to spiralling inflation, in the highest tax bracket. An independent businessman, on the other hand, now only deals without any invoices and wouldn't dream of declaring his turnover or income to the revenue office. According to their own information, last year 70,000 million lira[1] in income tax slipped through the hands of the Turkish Inland Revenue, which corresponds to a fifth of the national income. The national industries made a loss over the year of a further 100,000 million. They cannot do otherwise. With every change of government, new jobs-for-the-boys are dispensed, but the party friends of the old régime still remain in place; and governments change frequently in Turkey. The country prints money to offset these massive losses—the surest way, as is well known, of sending inflation soaring even higher.

IT IS THIS Turkish economy which Bonn's troubleshooter Hans Matthöfer, now wants to save in conjunction with big brother Süleyman. The Turkish premier promised great things when he began his latest spell of office: "The dead will rise again." But without long-term aid, such as the Marshall Plan that got Europe back on its feet after the last World War, and without control of actual expenditures, nothing will rise but that same old "bottomless barrel" which Helmut Schmidt always speaks of when he discusses the Bosphorus. For Turkey's foreign debts, inclusive of all interest and promised credits, amount to 40,000 million marks; the country won't earn that much in ten years; and this year there is an additional deficit of at least 6,000 million marks.

Demirel wants to plug half of this year's currency gap with Western credits. The Turks say they will find the rest themselves, stepping up their exports and talking their foreign workers out of going through the black market, but to judge from the past this may prove illusory. If the West pumps many more thousands of millions into the Turkish economy for years to come, if it ensures that these thousands of millions are used to develop Turkish oil fields, hydraulic power reserves, and export facilities, and not to enrich small, corrupt circles in Istanbul, then a new stability might be achieved.

Hans Matthöfer spends a third of his 90-hour working week knocking on doors in Washington, Tokyo, London and Paris in order to come up with

[1] A year ago the rate of exchange was 100 lira to seven marks. Today 100 lira cost DM2.50.

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the money, but will he be able to scrape together the credit Demirel is demanding for this West German foster-child? Above all, it is the Americans who are holding back. They imposed an arms embargo on Turkey in 1975, after the Cyprus war between Turkey and Greece—and thereby landed themselves with a latent anti-Americanism in the Bosphorus. This in turn pleased the powerful Greek lobby in the US Congress, which helped to prevent any increase in the annual rent paid to the Turks for the use of listening posts and aircraft bases. For the time being the figure remains at 400 million dollars of military and economic aid a year from Washington—just enough to cover the supply of spare parts.

Up to now the Americans have only promised to supply the NATO flank bordering on the USSR with seven installations for the Turkish armaments industry. The showpiece of this project is a scrapped batch of machinery that manufactures obsolete 90 mm ammunition for M-48 tanks. The Americans and the Germans long ago switched to modern 105 mm guns and economical diesel engines for their M-48s. Turkey would also like to modernise: it has 2,500 M-48s. It does not want to be sent "like a lamb to the slaughter" to face Russia's ultra-modern T-72 with this antique model from the Korean war, which can barely survive a military parade on Army Day.

The Turks would prefer to change immediately to the Leopard II, with which the German Federal Armed Forces are now being equipped. It is the only Western tank superior to the Russian T-72. But for five years now the Turks have begged for its predecessor, Leopard I, and at last Bonn intends to send out 60 of them (at two million marks apiece).

THE PICTURE is quite absurd. The West is pouring thousands of millions into the ruined economy of Turkey (a £527 m. loan package has now been agreed by fifteen countries of the OECD and the European Community)—without any reason to hope that this will effectively change the chaotic conditions. Yet it allows the only solid organisation in the country, the Army, to be starved of basic necessities, although it is supposed to safeguard NATO's highly sensitive south-east flank. The atmosphere in the joint troop bases is, accordingly, on the chilly side. Turkish and American officers hardly talk to one another there. For the Americans are offended too: the Turks are rejecting any modernisation of outmoded American radar units. They do not want to "provoke" their neighbours, the Russians, too far.

The Turks are even less keen on allowing anything that could be directed against their Islamic friends—in particular, the use of their air bases for possible missions in the Persian Gulf. In response to my question as to whether his country would participate in an operation to safeguard the oil-wells, by NATO for instance, ex-premier Ecevit, still leader of the largest party in Turkey, said: "Quite bluntly—no!" This attitude is also to be found in the government camp.

The Turks, who believe themselves to be "beset from the East" and "abandoned by the West", are seeking their future in the world of Islam—which will be in the driving seat anyway in the years to come, because it has the oil. But the Turks have connections with that world which go far beyond religious ties. For 50 million members of the Islamic Turkish races, the linguistic and ethnic Turkish family of Asia, Turkey is still the mother-country. Nowhere are these links more obvious at the moment than in neighbouring Iran. For the Azerbaijanis, the largest ethnic community in the Iranian multi-racial state, also rank among the Turkish races.

The most prominent Azerbaijani is Bani-Sadr, Iran's new President. He made the offer to "drive back the West and the East" in conjunction with Turkey in his mother tongue: Turkish. And it does not trouble him that before long Turkey will become a democratic Republic and not an Islamic Republic run by mullahs. However hard the West may strive, one wonders whether it may not have already lost the battle for Turkey. Not to the Russians, but to the awakening world of the Moslems.

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# EAST & WEST

## *The Ugly Silence*

# "Victims of Yalta" —an Inquiry?

## *By Nikolai Tolstoy*

IN HIS RECENT CONVERSATION with George Urban (ENCOUNTER, December 1979), Milovan Djilas spoke at some length on the question of forcible repatriation of Soviet and Yugoslav citizens at the end of World War II. His views are of exceptional interest, considering his deep personal knowledge of the Communist world and mentality, and the fact that he was in 1945 a member of a government which received and massacred indiscriminately many thousands of his returned fellow-citizens. He had, however, no direct responsibility for the killings at the time, and then and since condemned what he regards as a dreadful crime:

> "What the British did not realise, or at any rate didn't mention in their public utterances, was that the Soviet Union was no *normal*, that is to say, no *legitimate* state by any accepted standard. The British failed to see that the Soviet state had no independent judiciary, that the *MVD* or *NKVD* was the sole law in the land, and that returning these people to the Soviet Union was turning them over to naked terror."

Condemning even more strongly the surrender of between 20- and 40,000 Yugoslavs (subsequently massacred by Tito's troops), Djilas concludes:

> "I find it profoundly shocking that in an open and democratic society—which Britain is—it should have been possible to cover up, for almost thirty years, the whole question of forced repatriations, and that the men responsible have not been made to speak. There is surely a case here for a public enquiry."

This echoes calls made soon after the publication of my book *Victims of Yalta—The Secret Betrayal* in the USA—at the beginning of 1978. Peregrine Worsthorne, in a review, declared that

> "More than enough has now emerged about the Russian deportations to stir the national conscience, and the matter cannot be left as it is. If a new war crime on this scale had suddenly come to light in Germany, Britain would be the first to agitate for an inquiry; indeed for much more than that . . . if honour, at this late stage, can never be redeemed, at least dishonour can be squarely faced."

Hugo Young, in *The Sunday Times*, agreed:

> "An enquiry now would have at least three merits. It would, despite the scandalous destruction of public records already carried out, fill in gaps. . . . It could issue in some formal act of repentance and perhaps compensation by the British Government. . . . It would also assert that officials cannot expect to be treated as moral imbeciles and take their errors silently to the grave."

*The Times* (on 20 February 1978) devoted a long and unusually passionate leader to the subject, succinctly summarising my indictment of Foreign Office policy towards the Russians, and suggesting that a parliamentary committee be appointed to investigate the whole story. The article drew particular attention to the callous attitudes of former officials, and urged Mr Harold Macmillan to tell "all he knows." Several MPs, including Edward du Cann, John Stokes and Eldon Griffiths, pressed in the House of Commons for such an enquiry, but their call was rejected by the then Foreign Secretary, Dr David Owen. Dr Owen refused on the grounds that it "would be a major step if, having reduced the period before release of documents you then felt every time a document revealed criticism that you should set up some formalised enquiry." Behind this peculiar phraseology lay presumably a conception of repeated public enquiries being set up to investigate sensational disclosures coming to light annually under the 30-year rule. At the same time the Foreign Office rejected out of hand any idea of compensating the few survivors of the repatriation holocaust.

A view similar to this was put forward about the same time by Dame Rebecca West. Though strongly condemnatory of the policy and the officials who implemented it, she thought it unlikely that much would come out of such an enquiry that an enterprising historian might not be capable of unearthing independently, and that the fuss and publicity inevitably attendant on so sensational an event might actually obfuscate the details.

At the time I was inclined, reluctantly at first, to accept the force of this argument. There could surely not be a great deal of importance still to discover. The press, alerted by an appendix in *Victims of Yalta*, secured the release of the (innocuous, as it turned out) "Keelhaul" files, and scores of generous correspondents provided me with a vast array of confirmatory personal



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accounts to add to those I had already collected.[1] The officials responsible for the cruel policy seemingly stood condemned by an overwhelming majority of public opinion, and by their own otherwise unaccountable silence. Might not an enquiry even result in a certain amount of misplaced sympathy for these middle-aged gentlemen, dredged up pale and blinking into the sunlight?

Nearly two years later, after much reflection and further work on the problem, I find myself supporting Djilas's call. The dust has settled to some extent, and one can today view the question in a clearer light. The reasons for this change of heart are as follows.

Firstly, it is surely ludicrous to anticipate a series of comparable crimes or scandals coming to light in the Public Record Office every New Year's Day. Forcible repatriation involved ferocious ill-treatment over a period of three years of more than two-and-a-quarter million men, women and children, the great majority brought to an early end as a result of "executions", torture, and intolerably savage treatment in slave-labour camps. Most of them were innocent of any crime, and were simply desperate to escape return to a country where they would receive treatment worse than that they had known in Nazi prison camps. Can it really be believed that a crime remotely comparable could have taken place in the post-War period unknown to the public? And even if such a possibility exists, can it really be held that *no* crime, however monstrous, should be the subject of a public enquiry when discovered?

We are after all talking about a deed which many reputable writers have termed Britain's only real war crime, on a scale comparable to those inflicted by the Axis powers. There are those who affect

[1] The whole collection will eventually be deposited in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University.

## *"They pointed to their*

*Washington D.C.*

IN JUNE *1945, 153 frightened Soviet prisoners of war, who had been captured in German uniforms and feared they would be shot upon their return to Russia, begged President Harry S. Truman to allow them to stay in the United States.*

*The prisoners, who attempted to commit mass suicide by provoking their guards at Fort Dix, N. J., to shoot them, received a Presidential reprieve the next day. But classified documents disclose that all but 7 of the soldiers were handed over to the Russians after the public furore had died down. Their ultimate fate is not known.*

*The United States, the documents show, never swayed from its original intention to return the soldiers to the Soviet Union. Classified "secret" at the time, the repatriation of the Russians has been referred to since only in academic publications.*

ACCORDING TO FILES **gathered from the Department of War, the State Department and the Army, Federal officials were aware that the men would likely face death. But they believed the Soviet government would hinder the return of American prisoners of war in the Far East if the Russians were not repatriated.**

**Although it involved a small number of troops, the Fort Dix case was of critical importance to U.S. policy on this subject and it set the stage for American participation in larger repatriation efforts in Europe.**

**From internal government memorandums and telegrams, it is clear that the Russians' plight provoked intense debate within the Truman administration, with some diplomats, including Averell Harriman (then ambassador to the Soviet Union), urging that the U.S. allow the soldiers to stay.**

PUBLIC ATTENTION *was first focused on the ragtag group on June 29, 1945, when the soldiers attacked the military police at Fort Dix with pieces of metal.*

**"They just didn't appear to care for their lives at all," Capt. Richard Riewarts told Army investigators. "They pointed to their hearts and said shoot at it."**

*The next day, with the riot widely publicized, Truman stayed the repatriation order, but despite pleas from within the State Department, the Russians were quietly loaded onto a ship on Sept. 6, 1945. They were sent to Hof, in Bavaria, where they were handed over to Soviet authorities.*

THE WAR *had jumbled national borders in Europe, and repatriation had been a major issue among the Allies for several years. The British policy, which was essentially adopted by the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1944, demanded that prisoners be returned "irrespective of the question of whether or not they want to be repatriated."*

*U.S. officials were not happy with this. One telegram from officers in Europe predicted a wave of unfavourable public opinion if U.S. troops carried out the orders. Henry Stimson, the secretary of war, scrawled in a handwritten, undated memo that he objected.*

**"First thing you know," he said, "we will be responsible for a big killing by the Russians."**

*Under the terms of the Feb. 11, 1945, Yalta agreement, negotiated by the Allied powers, nationals held by one nation were to be returned to their country of origin. Throughout the early months of 1945, though, the declassified documents show that the United States spurned repeated Soviet requests to repatriate the prisoners, who claimed German citizenship, because it feared that the Nazis would harm U.S. prisoners of war.*

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cynical views on the general barbarity of warfare, but no possible comparison can be made with unlawful individual acts of bad behaviour, or controversial *acts of war* (the bombing of Dresden).

Most of the largest and worst repatriation operations took place in peacetime, being inflicted in cold blood, after long deliberation and many protests, on masses of defenceless and unresisting people. Major Jack Wolfe, now a retired police officer in Bristol, was compelled again and again in 1945 and 1946 to witness deeds committed openly in the British Zone of Germany that would, if committed by Germans a few months earlier, have furnished the indictment of one of the more horrific war crimes trials at which Mr Patrick Dean was then exercising his forensic skills.

Major Wolfe, in the course of his duties, had to stand by on repeated occasions when Soviet *NKVD* troops opened fire with sub-machine-guns on the inhabitants of a *DP*-camp at Delmenhorst. Every time a dozen or so were slaughtered without any apparent motive, babies in their mothers' arms being among the victims. Repeated protests from horrified British onlookers were met by an embarrassed confirmation that this was Foreign Office policy, and that nothing could be done to prevent it.

YET AS LATE AS *February 1948*, as a recently-released file (*FO.371/71661*) reveals, Patrick Dean of the Foreign Office was urging on an unwilling Commander-in-Chief in Austria the continuation of forced return of Russians demanded by the Soviets, and neither he nor the other surviving officials concerned (Lord Brimelow, Sir Geoffrey Wilson, and Sir John Galsworthy) is known to have expressed any regret then or since over the consequences of a policy they advocated and implemented with unrelenting ardour.

## *hearts and said shoot"*

*In May, the war in Europe was over and a major policy-making body, the State-War-Navy Coordinating Committee, ruled that any Russians captured in German uniforms should be immediately turned over to Soviet authorities. The order included several thousand prisoners held by the Allies in Europe as well as the 153 Russians incarcerated in the United States.*

*By June 28, the entire group had been assembled at Fort Dix and the Soviet ambassador was notified that their departure would take place the next day.*

**THEY WERE a mixed lot. Some had joined the Germans out of hatred for the Soviet Communists. Others had been captured by the Nazis and pressed into the German Army with threats of death. But all believed that a return to the Soviet Union would mean disaster for them and what remained of their families.**

**Overnight, they fashioned a plan to provoke their own deaths. The metal beds in Fort Dix barracks were easily dismantled and the parts served as weapons. At 9 the next morning, the Fort Dix executive officer, Capt. Riewarts, ordered the men to fall out. He spoke in German, and, he later told Army interrogators, "All I heard was a bunch of 'no's' or 'nein's'."**

**Tear gas was thrown into the barracks through a window to dislodge the recalcitrant prisoners. Moments later, the Russians charged out of the building toward the armed guards, shouting while swinging their makeshift weapons. Shots were fired, and nine Russians suffered wounds, none of them fatal.**

**After the guards quelled the uprising, Fort Dix officers found that three of the Russians had hanged themselves. Fifteen more nooses hung from the ceiling unused, the officers said.**

**ACCORDING TO the Army Inspector General's report, the prisoners were then loaded into buses and shipped to Camp Shanks, N.Y., to await their 30 June departure. The trip passed in relative calm, although one Russian had to be hospitalized after swallowing a razor blade.**

**The next day, the prisoners were granted their presidential reprieve, pending completion of an investigation of the Fort Dix riot and the nationality of each prisoner.**

**Further interrogation during July disclosed that seven prisoners were not Soviet citizens. Russian officials agreed to let them stay in the United States, but demanded the immediate return of the others. (It was not clear from the records how the three suicides were counted in the final figures.)**

WITHIN THE STATE DEPARTMENT, *the department of legal affairs contended that sending the prisoners to the Soviet Union would result in their execution and thus would violate the prisoners' rights under the Geneva Convention. Mr. Harriman reported from Moscow that trainloads of repatriates from all over Europe passed through the city, and he said those judged guilty of desertion were probably being shot.*

*The winding down of the war in the Far East ultimately led to a decision by the United States. On Aug. 20, 1945, Elbridge Durbrow, chief of the State Department's Division of European Affairs, said in a memo that the repatriation should take place without delay, "since there are a large number of American prisoners held by the Japanese in Manchuria who will shortly be liberated by the Soviet forces."*

**THE LAST REFERENCE to the deported soldiers is an official Army shipping order, stating that two Soviet majors, Valenian Sharapov and Pyotr Grechishkin, "will accompany shipment 099 to B516 [Hof] and thence to final destination."**

*International Herald Tribune*
*(Paris)*

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What seems to be particularly objectionable is not merely the fact of civil servants pursuing a policy so clearly contrary to all dictates of honour and humanity, but this quite exceptional and seemingly inexplicable zeal with which they pursued it. The lying to Ernest Bevin to ensure continuance has yet to be explained, as have the policy of returning non-Soviet citizens in Austria and the deception of the International Red Cross by Messrs Wilson and Galsworthy in the spring of 1945.

It was in June of 1944 that Patrick Dean expressed his opinion that

> "In due course all those with whom the Soviet authorities desire to deal must be handed over to them, and we are not concerned with the fact that they may be shot or otherwise more harshly dealt with than they might be under English law."

For as John Galsworthy noted coldly, "they seem to us to deserve no sympathy." Several such unsympathetic characters committed suicide, fearing the tortures blandly covered by Dean's euphemistic phraseology. Dean and Geoffrey Wilson successfully prevented news of this leaking to a sentimental public, as it "might possibly cause political trouble." What this involved, as a nervous Thomas Brimelow minuted elsewhere, was

> "A scandal with talk about irregular procedure, cheating people into accepting repatriation to the USSR etc."

Over a year later Brimelow was to spend weary weeks compelling reluctant military authorities in Italy to hand over a forlorn and desperate party of 55 refugees at a camp outside Rome, half of whom were women and children. He and his colleagues were ultimately successful, and the women and children (some of whom were babies) were returned to the certainty of a lingering death north of the Arctic Circle. Let any reader imagine for a moment that they were *his* children.

SURELY THERE MUST BE very strong justification for an official enquiry into the authors of a policy which, as they very well knew, resulted in anguished scenes such as those witnessed by Major Wolfe, multiplied a thousand-fold. Indeed, may one not go further, and call for a *judicial* enquiry? Many aspects of forced repatriation were not only contrary to all civilised codes of conduct, but also *illegal*. In failing to extend the provisions of the Geneva Convention to Russian prisoners and (by means of the spurious application of the Allied Forces Act) organising kidnappings on British soil, those responsible deliberately flouted international and British law. If such activities committed by British officials are to go uninvestigated, let alone unpunished, then just what was the moral basis of the German War Crimes Trials?

Apart from this, the overriding moral factor, there are plain facts of more than academic interest which a properly-constituted parliamentary enquiry could uncover. Before the publication of *Victims of Yalta*, apologists for Foreign Office policy, friends of Anthony Eden and the responsible officials, advanced the argument that it was fear lest Stalin hold British prisoners-of-war as hostages that led to the "agonising" decision. I showed (I believe) that this view was totally untenable—that no one expressed such a view at the time; that the policy continued long after the return of British prisoners was completed; that American toughness did not result in the least obstacle to returning US troops. As Geoffrey Wilson minuted *at the time*,

> "I very much doubt if the Russians will try to retain any of our men."

As if dispelled by the wind, the pretext of the safe return of British prisoners was never heard in public again. After a pause came fresh arguments, many of them stemming from consultations with one or other of the former officials. The Foreign Office knew nothing of conditions in Soviet Russia [2]; practically all the two-and-a-quarter million returned Russians were "war criminals" (they included thousands of women and children); they had in fact been eager to return; their fate has been exaggerated, etc.

If considerations such as these had really exercised the minds of statesmen and diplomats, why could the energetic and able survivors not say so publicly themselves? Why does Mr Macmillan remain silent over his part in the fate of the White Russian Cossacks in Austria? Why would Anthony Eden (Lord Avon) not agree to speak on the subject? Why are certain crucial identifiable documents still classified as inaccessible to historians? In short, the fundamental question: *What is the motive for their silence*? Formerly they could plead the Official Secrets Act. But this carpet was pulled from under their feet by the Foreign Secretary's statement (in the House of Commons on 22 February 1978) that

> "people involved who were still alive were free to comment on documents released under the 30-year rule."

In view of the unprecedented display of public indignation and shame which followed disclosure of the events of forced repatriation, this continued silence amounts to intolerable arrogance and insensitivity.

[2] Geoffrey Wilson had spent the early war years from 1940 in Moscow and Kuibyshev, making extensive tours in the country. Thomas Brimelow was there from 1942 to 1945, and in 1940 at Riga had personal knowledge of the deportation of thousands of Latvians to the camps of GULAG.

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# LETTERS

## History's Human Dimension

IN PLACING SO MUCH emphasis on individual, "human interest" experiences in my book *The Ides of August*, I knew in advance that I would exasperate many professional historians and critics. Lord Chalfont, who was kind enough to discuss it at some length in the February ENCOUNTER, is not, of course, a professional historian or a full-time book critic; but his passing objection to the wealth of human-interest detail to be found in this book (which deals with the Berlin Wall crisis of 1961) puts him closer to the historian he is not than to the biographer he has been.

Though I do not wholeheartedly subscribe to Emerson's subjectivist dictum—"there is properly no History, only Biography"—any more than I do to Tolstoy's populist theory of history (according to which collective national spirit is all-important and individual genius insignificant), I have come to the reluctant conclusion that the professional historians, in their search for "objectivity", have contributed almost as much as our economists to the deadening of contemporary sensibilities about the fate of persons condemned to live in supposedly "progressive" states.

The responsibility of the economists is fairly obvious, as is that of their disciples—those journalists who concentrate exclusively on the material aspects of human existence. Because they are primarily concerned with practical matters like wages and salaries, living costs, and the availability of this or that commodity, they fancy that they are dealing with concrete, down-to-earth realities, when in fact they are largely dealing in abstractions—such as budget estimates, state spending, private savings, capital investment, individual and corporate profits, growth trends, trade cycles, employment statistics, import and export surpluses or deficits, consumer demand, worker productivity, and so on.

THE HISTORIAN TOO is forced by the necessities of his craft to deal in abstractions or more precisely *extractions*. From a multiplicity of events and lives he must extract what he regards as meaningful, so that the reader may obtain a coherent as well as comprehensive view of the whole. He is forced to gain altitude, much as a climber must ascend to gain a more panoramic view. But inevitably, in this process of ascension, details become blurred and individual human lives dwindle to mere dots and ultimately disappear in collective entities—like the Nation, the State, the Government, this-or-that Party or Class, and that most deceptive and cynically exploited of all collective abstractions, the People.

When a dramatist like Vaclav Havel undertakes to describe how wholesale fear, an oppressive, omnipresent, omni-crippling fear, has worked itself into every nook and cranny of contemporary Czech and Slovak life—as he did in his magnificent "Open Letter to Comrade Husak" (published in ENCOUNTER, September 1975)—he is not dealing in abstractions. He is dealing with an atmosphere which, though it cannot be reduced to strict mathematical or statistical measurement, is more substantial, humanly real, and psychologically significant than the rent cost of an apartment or the price of a pint of beer.

Havel, recently imprisoned for his stubborn devotion to the truth, is not an economist, still less a historian. Nor is Alexander Solzhenitsyn, the man who has done more than any other in recent times to arouse our deadened sensibilities to the gigantic iniquity of Stalinist totalitarianism. To be sure, *The Gulag Archipelago* defies easy classification. It is not a work of fiction—like *One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich*, Dostoevsky's *Notes from the House of the Dead*, or a didactic novel like Dickens's *Nicholas Nickleby*. But one has only to compare *The Gulag Archipelago* with, let us say, the first volume of E. H. Carr's *A History of Soviet Russia*—full of wooden accounts of workers' Soviets meeting to discuss this or that resolution, etc.—to perceive the immense gulf that separates grippingly vital from supposedly "objective" history.

Far be it from me to disparage historians and history-writing. But just as for millions of Americans it was not a historian but a journalist, William Shirer, who first awoke them (with his *Berlin Diary*) to the daily iniquities of Nazism, so for me it was another journalist, Walter Duranty (in his book, *I Write as I Please*), who first revealed to me the inhuman ferocity of Stalinist fanaticism. Nothing could have been more forced and ridiculous than Duranty's attempted apologia ("the ends justify the means") for the sweeping anti-*kulak* purge of the early 1930s, but his on-the-spot descriptions of mass starvation in the Ukraine, though not quite as grim as Victor Kravchenko's later account in *I Chose Freedom* (where peasant women were portrayed frying cakes of dung to keep themselves and their families from starving), were harrowing enough to make me understand that there was something viscerally wrong with this "great, new experiment" in collective human endeavour.

THIS IS WHY, in *The Ides of August*, I kept switching the focus back and forth from the deliberations of the rulers (Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Walter Ulbricht, Erich Mielke, Willy Brandt, Konrad Adenauer, Harold Macmillan, Charles de Gaulle, John Kennedy, Dean Rusk, etc.) to the preoccupations, anxieties, and sufferings of the ruled. The contrast I was seeking to establish was not of an "upstairs-downstairs" type, as a *Time* reviewer ingeniously suggested, but rather the contrast that exists, and probably cannot fail to exist, between the stark reality of the "front" and the cushioned unreality of the "rear" (so often installed in luxury hotels, requisitioned palaces, or captured castles). This contrast, I might add, was not invented by Cornelius Ryan or any other 20th-century journalist. It is at least as old as Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, where at one moment we are shown Emperor Alexander and his glittering suite, and then at the next are thrust into the company of a humble captain of artillery.

Difficult though it admittedly is to combine these two perspectives—the tactical and the strategic—this is, I believe, what historians should strive for. To view human events from the point of view of Sirius is ultimately to make them meaningless. If Keynes was a great economist, it was because he was much more than an



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economist. Which is perhaps a roundabout way of suggesting that History, and above all Contemporary History, is far too serious a matter to be left to those who are professional historians and nothing more.

CURTIS CATE

*Paris*

## Astrology & Science

MAY I, AS a practitioner of one of the "hard" sciences, make the following points in regard to Professor H. J. Eysenck's article in the December ENCOUNTER.

*1.* The fact that a particular discipline may contain theories that make falsifiable predictions is not sufficient to confer on that discipline scientific status. The theories must not only have *made* falsifiable predictions, but they must also have *survived* them. Otherwise, science is devalued, for any foolish set of beliefs could dignify itself by that name. I could claim, for instance, to have founded a "science" called aviology, which predicts that a person's character is influenced at birth by the number and variety of birds in the sky. A person's character would therefore be either "auspicious" or "avernal", and so on. Evidence might confute me, but, as Eysenck seems to recommend, I would still be a "scientist." His suggestion that for borderline cases the verification test is more appropriate than falsification is a generous one, but pointless if not harmful. When there is great clamour for membership of a club, what is the sense of lowering admission standards?

*2,* The condemnation of astrology by many scientists is not merely the prejudice of closed minds. In their defence, one must remember, firstly, that astrology arose in times when nobody knew the vast scale of the universe and when consequently the heavenly bodies were supposed to be quite near and, as their motions clearly confirmed, man-centred; and, secondly, that this ancient tale has been offered passionate trust in our day because for very many people neither the established religions nor the established sciences do much to satisfy the soul. Belief in astrology, like belief in such matters as ESP, clairvoyance, and so on, therefore seems to be a kind of systematised wishful thinking, with which one could sympathise if only it were honestly admitted. It is the unadmitted presence of this wishful thinking by its believers that gives the dismissal by scientists of astrology its intolerant tone.

*3.* Where there appears to be a significant association between human personality and regular astronomical events, there is always the persistent possibility that the astrological predictions based on these events have merely been self-fulfilling. As Eysenck describes, this self-fulfilment effect was enough to invalidate the Mayo set of astrological assertions. The remarkable findings of the Gauquelins on the association of Mars and Jupiter with extraversion and of Saturn with introversion are probably best checked for this effect by conducting tests with laboratory animals.

If there really exist astrological phenomena for human beings, such phenomena must surely be present in rudimentary form for, say, mice or monkeys. The analogue in the animal world of extraversion-introversion is probably something like agressiveness-placidity, which must surely be assessable on so familiar a species as laboratory mice. Experiments of this kind would trade a little of astrology's human concerns for a far greater ease of controlled experimentation, would eliminate the self-fulfilment effect, and would help give astrology its desired "hard-science" status.

R. B. FRENKEL

*Roseville, New South Wales*
*Australia*

MR FRENKEL makes three points. The first I agree with; however, the admission standards in question, which he and I criticise, were laid down by Karl Popper, not myself. It is to him that Frenkel should address his complaints. The second point is that the condemnation of astrology by many scientists is not merely the prejudice of closed minds. If he could assure me that these scientists had actually looked at the publications reporting alleged positive findings, I would feel happier in agreeing with him. My own experience has been that scientists condemn astrology entirely on *a priori* grounds, which to me at least is evidence of prejudice and of a closed mind.

On the third point I beg to disagree completely. Mr Frenkel suggests that the association between occupations and planetary positions, which Gauquelin found—or the relationships with personality that we found jointly—is due to some kind of self-fulfilling prophecy. It is difficult to see how that could be because the traditional astrological predictions would place the crucial time of birth somewhat differently to those actually observed! In other words, had the prophecies been self-fulfilling, Gauquelin's results would have been different. Mr Frenkel suggests animal experiments. If he can really demonstrate something corresponding to extraversion-introversion in laboratory animals, I would

## *Disallowed*

**Official Gazette No. 3, 18 Jan. 1980 [p.99]**

**[Item] 19.**

*On the basis of Article 59, Section 1, and with reference to Article 13 of the Law dealing with the importation and distribution of foreign information media in Yugoslavia (Official Gazette No. 39/74), the Federal Secretary for Internal Affairs has made the following*

**DECISION**

CONCERNING THE BAN OF THE IMPORTATION AND CIRCULATION OF THE MAGAZINE "ENCOUNTER"

**It is disallowed to import and to distribute in Yugoslavia the magazine "ENCOUNTER", No. 6, for December 1979 which has appeared in the English language in London, Great Britain.***

*No. 650-1-32/452*
*Belgrade, 26 December 1979*

DEPUTY FEDERAL SECRETARY
FOR INTERNAL AFFAIRS
**Drasko Jurisic** (*signed*)

* *Ed. Note* (ENCOUNTER): This particular number of the magazine featured the following articles—A. J. Ayer on the philosophy of Gilbert Ryle; Austin Mitchell on the future of Socialism; H. J. Eysenck on Astrology; and Milovan Djilas, an interview with George Urban.

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# *Life & Letters Today*

*London*

RIBTICKLEOUS: *Denys Parsons, devoted to misprints and other published oddities, has brought out "Funny Ribtickleous and Funny Ridiculous."*

*Examples include this rural sign: "Horse manure. A filled bag 25 pence. Do it Yourself 15 pence."*

*From the Straits Times of Singapore: "They were waving huge, colorful flags, somersaulting and going through various difficult movements of the Chinese marital arts."*

*From a Calcutta paper: "For sale to a kind master, full grown, domesticated tigress, goes daily walk untied and eats flesh from the hand."*

*Parsons also liked the report on the Coast Guard captain and coroner who, after viewing a headless, armless and legless torso, "both voiced the opinion that the 65-year-old real estate agent had been slain."*

*Sign in an Istanbul hotel: "To call room service please to open the door and call Room Service."*

*Closer to home, in a Berkshire parish magazine: "Sister Gillian's bust clinic referred to last month was, of course, a 'busy' clinic."*

*From a Bedfordshire paper: "An unexpected vacancy for a knife-thrower's assistant. Rehearsals start immediately."*

*And: "Mr. Spalding believed that the secret of his eternal youth lay in the fact that he had an early morning skipping session followed by a long walk every day. The funeral takes place next Tuesday."*

UNITED PRESS

*London*

**"ACKERS": Concerning the origin of the slang word "ackers" for money, I believe the following is the true derivation.**

**The slang name arose during World War II, particularly in Cairo where most desert troops visited.**

**The Egyptian pound contained 100 piastres, which quickly became "disasters" in rhyming slang. To the troops a disaster was an "accident", hence in short "acker".**

DAILY MAIL

*Hollywood*

SPLITSPEAK: *Soft-focus language can be creative. "PEOPLE" magazine discusses "splitspeak", the vocabulary of separation, quoting Hollywood composer David Shire about his "very positive and loving separation" from his wife, Talia. She explained, "We're going to rotate the house and we even rotate the cars. We've been separated for four months, and it's a growing experience."*

*He moved out, and has not moved back in a year. Her nouvelle-vague way of coping linguistically with this definitive indecision: "We're into distancing."*

NEW YORK TIMES

*Albany*

**DEFINITIONS: Despite the opposition of religious educators, some of whom invoked the Bible to argue their point, a committee of the Board of Regents voted today to prohibit corporal punishment in church-affiliated schools as well as in public schools in the state.**

**Representatives of several fundamentalist Christian schools argued that the proposed action would be contrary to church practice. "We believe the Bible to be very specific in its instruction to parents concerning the practice of spanking our children," said Carl H. Bish, vice-president of the New York Association of Christian Schools. "Others have defined this as corporal punishment; we define it as loving discipline."**

NEW YORK TIMES

*New York City*

EQUIVALENCES: *Last night Defence Counsel Evseroff went wearily home after the third full day of cross-examination through which he has struggled to portray Miss Melanie Cain as a Circe turning men into swine, a thesis upon whose plausibility his client, murder-suspect Buddy Jacobson's only real chance would seem to hang.*

*At one point yesterday, perhaps his highest, Evseroff managed to elicit from Miss Cain the courtroom concession that, in one of their several last farewells, she may have dismissed Jacobson in language roughly translatable as "Get the Carnal Knowledge out of Here, You Anal Cavity."*

*Time was [Murray Kempton writes] when words so vulgar on lips so soft would have affronted the gently-nurtured; but enough Romeos get themselves directed hence by enough Juliets in such terms these days as to make them almost our age's equivalent for "Parting is such sweet sorrow."*

NEW YORK POST

*London*

**MUZAK: Amusing spelling mistakes abound in foreign menus, but I had not realized that they had arrived in the world of electrical goods. Last week I bought an Aiwa radio cassette recorder, made in Singapore, and with it there was a presentation cassette recording of an orchestra purporting to play "Hangarian Dance 5".**

**Have any other readers bought Aiwa equipment and if so is my cassette but one of a series of popular classical pieces such as: "Bizet's Carman", "Siegfried's Idle" and "Tchaikovsky's Leaping Beauty"?**

THE TIMES

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be most grateful to him. We have been trying to do this for many years, but have found insuperable difficulties in the way.

H. J. EYSENCK

*Institute of Psychiatry*
*Maudsley Hospital*
*University of London*

## "I. B. Singer's Poland"

IN HIS LETTER Mr Lech Badkowski (ENCOUNTER, October) claims that there was no pro-Nazi party in pre-war Poland and even the extreme right-wing Nationalist Party "went underground and fought the Germans as all the nation did." I would like to draw the attention of your readers to what that party's organ, *Walka* (*Struggle*), had to say in April 1943, during the last heroic fight of Jewish rebels in the Warsaw ghetto:

> "Even in those places where Poland had never been properly understood and where she had often been abused—inside the Ghetto walls—even there, when it came to the last stand, the Polish flags were hoisted, the symbol of the struggle to punish the murderers. Indeed, the fighting Jew realised that not through his predicament, *which he manifoldly deserved* [my italics], but only in the name of Poland would he be able to shake the world."

Judging by the actual behaviour of the Poles during those horrible days the Nationalist Party was not a tiny minority.

YEHOSHUA PORATH

*Hebrew University*
*Jerusalem, Israel*

# AUTHORS

**Richard Stern** is Professor of English at the University of Chicago. His last novel, *Natural Shocks*, won the first Carl Sandburg Award in fiction. A collection of his short stories, *Packages*, will be published in the autumn by Coward McCann (New York) and Sidgwick & Jackson.

**Alain Besançon** is Director of Studies at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, where he teaches Russian history and culture. His books include *The Soviet Syndrome* (Harcourt Brace, 1978), *Les Origines intellectuelles du leninisme*, and *La Confusion des langues* (Calmann-Lévy, 1978).

**George Watson** is a Fellow in English of St John's College, Cambridge, editor of the "Unservile State Group", and author of *Politics and Literature in Modern Britain* (Macmillan, 1977) and *Is Socialism Left?* (Liberal Publication Department). In June 1979 he contested Leicester as a Liberal in the European Assembly election. His lecture was delivered to the Acton Society in London last November.

**Robert Skidelsky** is Professor of International Studies at the University of Warwick; his inaugural lecture, "Keynes & The Reconstruction of Liberalism", appeared in the April 1979 issue of ENCOUNTER. Among his books are *The End of the Keynesian Era* (Macmillan, 1977), and a controversial biography of Sir Oswald Mosley (Macmillan, 1975).

**Raymond Aron**, the French political philosopher, teacher, and journalist, is Professor at the Ecole Pratique des Hautes Études in Paris. His books include *History and the Dialectic of Violence* (n.e. Blackwell, 1979), *Policies and History* (Collier Macmillan, 1979), *Opium of the Intellectuals* (Greenwood Press, 1977), and *The Imperial Republic: The United States and the World, 1945–73* (Weidenfeld, 1975).

**François Bondy** is an editor of the monthly *Schweizer Monatshefte* and of *Die Weltwoche* (Zurich).

**Clive James** is Television Critic for *The Observer* in London. He has published two volumes of literary criticism—*The Metropolitan Critic* and *At The Pillars of Hercules* (Faber, 1974, 1979), three mock-epic poems, and a book of verse letters, *Fanmail* (Faber, 1977). *Unreliable Memoirs*, a volume of autobiography written as "a disguised novel", has just been published by Jonathan Cape, who in 1977 brought out a volume of his television criticism.

**John Naughton** is Lecturer in Systems at the Open University. His review "Science and Anarchism" appeared in the June 1979 issue of ENCOUNTER.

**Tom Paulin** is Lecturer in English at the University of Nottingham. His latest book of poems, *The Strange Museum*, is published this spring by Faber.

**Bernard Dixon** is European Editor of *Omni* magazine, and was from 1969–79 editor of *New Scientist*. His books include *Beyond the Magic Bullet: The Real Story of Medicine* (Allen & Unwin, 1978), *Invisible Allies: Microbes and Man's Future* (Temple Smith, 1976), and *What is Science For?* (n.e. Penguin, 1976).

**George Szirtes** is joint winner of the Geoffrey Faber Memorial Prize for his book of poems *The Slant Door* (Secker, 1979).

**Kai Krueger** is foreign correspondent for *Stern* Magazine.

**Count Nikolai Tolstoy** is the author of *Victims of Yalta* (Hodder, 1978, Corgi, 1979), and is now completing a sequel to that study of forced repatriation. His biography of Thomas Pitt, *Half Mad Lord*, was published by Cape in 1978.

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